



ridedon'thide



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*



THE JOURNEY SO FAR  
RIDE DON'T HIDE  
**2010-17**

# THE BEGINNING OF RIDE DON'T HIDE MICHAEL SCHRATTER A TEACHER, A SON, A BROTHER

Michael Schratter took a 15-month sabbatical from teaching to cycle the world to confront stigma and discrimination of mental illness. Giving back is a learned sensibility taught by thoughtful caring parents—thank you to Margit Schratter, Michael's Mom, and Michael.

As Michael has said many times, "Ride Don't Hide is the medicine to confront stigma and discrimination."



Ride Don't Hide 2012—Michael Schratter is greeted by his mother as he returns to Vancouver from his year-long, 40,000 km ride to battle the stigma of mental illness

# RIDE DON'T HIDE MICHAEL SCHRATTER'S

# LEGACY

## 1990s Dreaming of change

As early as his preteen years, Michael Schratte was aware that he was different.

Growing up bipolar in a small BC town in the 1980s, there was no mental health education, and the stigma surrounding mental illness kept Michael silent.

Later, while in university, after cycling solo across Canada, Michael realized that this stigma and feeling that caused millions of high-functioning and successful people to stay silent about their various mental illness afflictions had to be broken. A different story and dialogue had to present itself in the public discourse, and this could only be done by people speaking out.

The idea of Ride Don't Hide was born.

## 2010–11 Starting a global movement

The Ride Don't Hide movement began on August 1, 2010, as Michael, now a Vancouver teacher and newspaper columnist, embarked on a solo global journey to cycle the equatorial distance of 40,000 km.

The 16-month trek had Michael cycling through 33 countries on six continents, while writing a bi-weekly mental health newspaper column for Vancouver 24 Hours and stopping to conduct numerous school and media interviews.

Michael's mission was to raise funds for the Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division (CMHA BC), while sharing compassionate mental health stories with people in different countries in order to break down the stigma surrounding mental illness.



The journey begins in Vancouver, Canada



Exploring Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam on new wheels

A boost of encouragement from supporters in "The Village."  
Los Angeles, USA



While Michael rode, thousands of people shared their own personal stories and made promises to help change the negative perceptions surrounding mental illness on the Ride Don't Hide website and Facebook page.

The 2010–11 Ride Don't Hide grassroots campaign reached millions of people and raised \$100,000 for CMHA's child and youth mental health programs. CMHA BC Division supported Michael's ride with 18 months

of volunteer and staff time, media relations services and fundraising initiatives in BC, during the ride and following the completion of the ride.

CMHA BC supported and invested in Michael's initial goal to cycle the globe. They have lead the Ride Don't Hide movement, carrying the risk and responsibility for 6 years supporting CMHA branches and the Ride Don't Hide legacy.



# RIDE DON'T HIDE 2010-17: A BRIEF TIMELINE

## 2010 SETTING WHEELS IN MOTION

**19.03.2010** – Michael Schratter first approached CMHA BC Division with his plan to circumnavigate the world by bicycle to break the debilitating stigma and raise funds for mental health. Inspired by his story, Walter at reception called Bev Gutray, CEO to hear Michael's story.

**27.03.2010** – One week later, inspired by Michael's moving story and plan to ride, Bev Gutray invited Michael to present his plan to the CMHA BC Division board of directors.

**19.06.2010** – Michael presented to CMHA BC Division board detailing the Ride Don't Hide World Bike Tour route; the media network; trial web page; the communications mechanism such as Facebook, Twitters have been in place; donor pledge photo collage; the launch is July 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Buschlen Mowatt Gallery with silent auction; his intended departure date is Aug. 6, 2010.

### Motion 10-03:

That the BC Division Board supports the "Ride don't Hide World Bike Tour" as a third party fundraising event for CMHA BC.

**22.07.2010** – Launch event at Buschlen Mowatt Gallery with Senator Larry Campbell and Shelagh Rogers, OC and the host, and a producer, of CBC Radio One's *The Next Chapter* in addition to being a Patron for CMHA BC Division.

**01.08.2010** – Michael departs on "Ride Don't Hide World Bike Tour" with his trusty 105 lbs. bike, social media and his website to keep him connected to family and friends back home.

**01.08.2010** – Vancouver Mayor, Gregor Robertson proclaims August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 as Ride Don't Hide Day.

**27.11.2010** – Michael has reached 25% of target distance



Vancouver Mayor, Gregor Robertson presents the Ride Don't Hide Day proclamation





40,000 km behind him and family and friends welcoming Michael home. Vancouver, Canada

## 2011 THE HOME STRETCH

**17.01.2011** – Ride Don't Hide and CMHA BC is proud to partner with Steve Nash Fitness Clubs for a one-day spin-a-thon event, joined by Christy Clarke, BC Past Premier

**11.03.2011** – Michael has asked for CMHA BC to support media and fundraising.

### **Motion: 10-64:**

That the BC Division Board approve the investment of \$40,000 to the Ride Don't Hide for fundraising support and media relations

**15.08.2011** – Michael began his 10,000km final leg in Halifax across Canada. CMHA BC Division organized nation-wide media and promotion events.

**13.10.2011** – Michael arrives in his home town Vernon, BC. A welcome home event hosted by CMHA Vernon in support of child and youth mental health initiatives.

**12.11.2011** – Michael Schratte made his final leg of his ride into Vancouver from Tsawwassen where he was joined by 30 riders. The number of riders doubled in Richmond at the Richmond Oval and again at Langara College. Under police escort from the Vancouver Police Department, the riders made their way to Rogers Arena for the Welcome Home Celebration. Over 500 people weathered the rain and wind to cheer Michael as he came home.

Relive the journey through Michael's Ride Don't Hide blog at <http://original.ridedonthide.com>

“What you're doing in helping raise awareness about [mental health] is you're making it easier for people to be able to get the help they need.”

—Premier Christy Clark at the Ride Don't Hide Spinathon at Steve Nash Fitness World and Sports Club





Bev Gutray, CEO, CMHA BC (left) and Judy Moore, CMHA BC Board Chair (right) took a leap of faith and set the wheels in motion.

## 2012 THE START OF SOMETHING BIG

Since the successful completion of Michael's global journey, Ride Don't Hide has been adopted by CMHA nationally as their leading anti-mental illness stigma campaign. Led by CMHA BC, the Ride Don't Hide Community Bike movement began.

**11.02.2012** – Decision to continue Ride Don't Hide legacy with a community bike ride. The campaign to date has raised \$76,500 overall across Canada. Branches not including CMHA BC raised \$14,443 benefiting mental health programs for children and youth in their community. The CMHA BC raised the remaining \$62,057 with corporate donations and sponsorship accounting for \$9,985 and individuals donating the remaining \$52,072. In addition, approximately \$51,500 in gifts in kind were received from hotel accommodations, advertising, consulting services and newspapers.

### Motion: 11-49:

The CMHA BC Division Board approves to proceed with a Memorandum of Understanding that combines the CMHA Vancouver–Burnaby Community Ride with CMHA BC's Ride Don't Hide event.

**24. 06.2012** – The CMHA Community Bike Ride partnered with Ride Don't Hide. The combined event was a partnership between CMHA Vancouver–Burnaby, North & West Vancouver, and CMHA BC. The Lower Mainland Ride Don't Hide Community Bike Ride raised \$75,000 and engaged 500 an increase of approx. 400 participants. In 100 Mile House, CMHA South Cariboo branch held its first Ride Don't Hide community bike ride, engaged over 60 participants and raised over \$10,000 for mental health programs and services. Due to the generosity of our sponsors, 100% of these funds were invested in programs and services to serve the 1 in 5 of our colleagues, friends and family members who need support.



In 2009, Chris Reynolds of Central Vancouver Cycling Club and Mel Thompson of The Ride for Mental Health inspired CMHA Vancouver–Burnaby to host the first CMHA Community Bike Ride in BC to raise funds to support programs for people with mental illness. Thanks to the diligent work of Chris and Mel, the Community Bike Ride was an instant success both as a fundraiser and as a way to create awareness for mental health in Vancouver and Burnaby.



## 2013 GROWING PROVINCE-WIDE

**18.06.2013** – Message from Peter Coleridge, CMHA National CEO to CMHA branches hosting a ride:

This is CMHA's first province-wide fundraising event and it has helped to strengthen our CMHA brand in BC and beyond, as well as provided opportunities to build community partnerships and work collaboratively within the CMHA family. Other provincial and community CMHA locations are looking to Ride Don't Hide as a model and a couple of CMHA locations are launching Ride Don't Hide in their communities. This is an inspirational example of how CMHA is living and applying its new strategic goals to the work we do every day.

**23.06.2013** – First province-wide Shoppers Drug Mart Ride Don't Hide charity bike ride. The ride entered a new era with 13 BC local community bike rides and one in York Region, Ontario. The goal was to engage over 2,500 participants and raise \$400,000 to strengthen and support mental health programs and services for women and their families. 2,124 people joined the movement of mental health for all and \$518,214 was raised.

### Ride Don't Hide 2013 Locations

**BC:** Greater Vancouver, Victoria, Cowichan Valley (Duncan), Mid-Island (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, Cariboo-Chilcotin (Williams Lake), Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Shuswap-Revelstoke (Salmon Arm), South Okanagan-Similkameen (Penticton), Vernon

**Ontario:** Greater Toronto

“Today I rise in the House to speak about an awareness event which took place on Sunday, June 23, 2013, in 13 communities across our province. The Canadian Mental Health Association of BC partnered with Shoppers Drug Mart to organize Ride Don't Hide. This was CMHA's first-ever-BC wide bike awareness event. Ride Don't Hide proved to be a much-needed venue for people to speak out about women's mental health issues and begin the steps to break down the stigmas associated with mental illness.”

—Honourable Sue Hammell, MLA at the First Session of the 40th Parliament Statements – Standing Order 25B

The Ultimate Team – Michael and Deborah Schratte riding in the Greater Vancouver Ride Don't Hide event.



## 2014 BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

**05.06.2014** – Michael Schratte's Ride Don't Hide world tour honored at BC Sports Hall of Fame. To recognize Michael Schratte and his Ride Don't Hide legacy, the BC Sports Hall of Fame has mounted a display in its Hall of Champions featuring Michael's trusty Norco Cabot Touring bike that, when fully loaded with everything from bear spray to duct tape, weighed 105 pounds.

**22.06.2014** – Ride Don't Hide started crossing the country and was hosted in four provinces with 3,650 participants in 20 communities raising over \$800,000.

### Ride Don't Hide 2014 Locations

**BC:** Greater Vancouver, Victoria, Cowichan Valley (Duncan), Mid-Island (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, Cariboo-Chilcotin (Williams Lake), Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Shuswap-Revelstoke (Salmon Arm), South Okanagan-Similkameen (Penticton), Vernon

**Ontario:** Greater Toronto, Brant Haldimand-Norfolk, Grey Bruce, Halton, Lambton Kent, Middlesex, Peel Region-Caledon Hills,

**Alberta:** Calgary



To recognize Michael Schratte and his Ride Don't Hide legacy, on June 5, 2014 the BC Sports Hall of Fame mounted a display in its Hall of Champions featuring Michael's trusty Norco Cabot Touring bike and a map of global tour route.



## 2015 BREAKING THE \$1 MILLION MARK

**21.06.2015** – Thousands of Canadians cycled together for mental health at Ride Don't Hide, the largest participatory event for mental health in Canada. The ride brought together Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life to help break the stigma and raise funds to improve mental health in their community. On June 21, 2015, Father's Day, 4,744 mental health supporters took part in 27 community rides, raising almost \$1,170,000 for mental health. It is the first time CMHA has raised more than \$1 million for mental health services.

### Ride Don't Hide 2015 Locations

**BC:** Greater Vancouver, Victoria, Cowichan Valley (Duncan), Mid-Island (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, Cariboo-Chilcotin (Williams Lake), Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Shuswap-Revelstoke (Salmon Arm), South Okanagan-Similkameen (Penticton), Vernon

**Ontario:** Greater Toronto, Brant Haldimand-Norfolk, Cochrane-Timiskaming, Grey Bruce, Halton, Kenora-Fort Frances, Lambton Kent, Middlesex, Niagara, Oxford County, Peel Region-Caledon Hills, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury/Manitoulin, Windsor

**Alberta:** Calgary



“As a person who suffers from anxiety, it was nice to see such a large mass of people who were experiencing things similar to me. I am so happy that this money will go to help others. And it's great to see so many people being so open about their mental health problems.”

—Leah Churchley, Ride Don't Hide 2015 participant



Standing strong together with a dedicated team, Ride Don't Hide continued to grow. In Victoria (from left) Bev Gutray, CEO, CMHA BC; Gillian Carleton, Olympian; Omar Alasaly, Pharmacist-Owner, Shoppers Drug Mart; Megan Brown, Ride Don't Hide National Manager; Jonny Morris, Senior Director of Policy; Kim Findlay, Director of Development, CMHA BC.



Lisa Helps, Mayor of Victoria leading the charge.



Jim Hayden, co-owner of multiple Noodlebox franchise locations in Victoria has held a charity day each year in support of the CMHA . In 2018, he encouraged all Noodlebox locations to join in. To date Noodlebox has raised \$45,000 for Ride Don't Hide.

Rebecca Shields, CEO, CMHA York and South Simcoe was a mover and shaker helping to grow Vancouver's Community Bike Ride into something bigger, Ride Don't Hide. She then spearheaded the expansion of the ride from BC into Ontario.





## 2016 CROSSING BORDERS

**7.06.2016** – 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ride Don't Hide community event. Since the inaugural ride in 2012 in BC, the event has seen a 70% increase in the number of riders and raised over \$2.5 million for mental health programs. More than 6,000 mental health supporters took part in the CMHA's Ride Don't Hide charity bike ride, raising nearly \$1.5 million for mental health programs and services.

### Ride Don't Hide 2016 Locations

**BC:** Greater Vancouver, Victoria, Mid-Island (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, Kamloops, Prince George, Shuswap-Revelstoke (Salmon Arm), South Okanagan-Similkameen (Penticton), Vernon

**Ontario:** Greater Toronto, Brant Haldimand-Norfolk, Cochrane-Timiskaming, Grey Bruce, Halton, Hamilton, Kenora, Lambton Kent, Middlesex, Niagara, Oxford County, Peel Region-Caledon Hills, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury/Manitoulin, Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin, Windsor

**Alberta:** Calgary

**Saskatchewan:** Regina

**Manitoba:** Winnipeg



“[Ride Don't Hide] was a positive environment to address a very challenging issue.”

— Ride Don't Hide 2016 participant

“I am more vocal in trying to remove the stigma of mental illness. It did empower me. Proud to have volunteered.”

— Ride Don't Hide 2016 volunteer



## 2017 COAST TO COAST

**25.06.2017** – 6,700 mental health supporters took part nationally in Ride Don't Hide, raising over \$1.6 million for mental health programs and services. Celebrating its sixth anniversary, Ride Don't Hide took place in 30 communities throughout the country, from Newfoundland to British Columbia, making it Canada's largest community bike ride for mental health. 30% of CMHA branches in Canada, across 6 provinces, hosted a Ride Don't Hide event and were able to raise essential funds to support mental health programs within their local communities.

### Ride Don't Hide 2017 Locations

**BC:** Greater Vancouver, Victoria, Mid-Island (Nanaimo), Port Alberni, Kamloops, Prince George, Shuswap-Revelstoke (Salmon Arm), South Okanagan-Similkameen (Penticton), Vernon

**Ontario:** Greater Toronto, Brant Haldimand-Norfolk, Cochrane-Timiskaming, Grey Bruce, Halton, Hamilton, Kenora, Lambton Kent, Middlesex, Niagara, Oxford County, Peel Dufferin, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury/Manitoulin, Waterloo-Wellington-Dufferin, Windsor Essex

**Alberta:** Calgary

**Saskatchewan:** Regina

**Manitoba:** Winnipeg

**Newfoundland:** St John's



“We have both faced battles with mental illness. When I have a bad day she lifts me up. When she has a bad day I lift her up. On June 25<sup>th</sup> we will participate in Ride Don't Hide, raising awareness (and money) to help end the stigma surrounding mental illness...”

—@newton11, Ride Don't Hide 2017 participant

# THANK YOU SHOPPERS DRUG MART

In 2013, CMHA BC secured Shoppers Drug Mart as Ride Don't Hide Provincial Title Sponsor in BC. The Shoppers Drug Mart team, through sponsorship, store events, bracelet sales and peer-to-peer fundraising made the largest combined impact for Ride Don't Hide raising nearly \$500,000 over 4 years.

We want to thank Shoppers Drug Mart for the:

- Courage to talk openly about Mental Health
- Leadership you've shown in raising awareness and funds for Mental Health
- Support that's helped raise Ride Don't Hide's profile to become a national movement
- Kindness you have shown to all the riders and participants and all whose lives your generosity touched

2013 Shoppers Drug Mart team



We ran out of pink bracelets before our first ride—this was thanks to the passion and commitment of Omar Alasaly and Bojana Dzombeta, who together promoted the ride to BC Shoppers Drug Mart stores as a Peers Charity fundraiser





## FUNDS RAISED BY SHOPPERS DRUG MART

	RIDERS	\$ RAISED IN-STORE	\$ RAISED BY RIDERS	SPONSORSHIP	TOTAL \$ RAISED
2013	206	57,063	17,727	50,000	\$124,790
2014	153	78,218	21,997	50,000	\$150,214
2015	190	52,511	20,222	50,000	\$122,733
2016	99	33,436	16,057	50,000	\$99,493
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>\$221,228</b>	<b>\$76,013</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$497,230</b>

The Shoppers Drug Mart Love.You. contest in 2016 invited British Columbians to nominate and vote for women's mental health champions. 22 entries were received, and the contest drew 6,756 website views and 3,426 votes. The winner, Victoria Maxwell (right), was presented with 1,000,000 Shoppers Optimum Points by Shoppers Drug Mart representatives.



# IMPACT

## My Thanks by Mary

2011

Last summer, my dad was evicted from his apartment in Chemainus. He ended up in a shelter called Warmland House, which someone had mentioned to him. To me it seemed like just a plain old shelter. Nothing that Daddy hadn't seen before, but then again, I hadn't seen it or heard much of it. It was just a homeless shelter in Duncan. I didn't even know that it was funded by CMHA. After a month or so of staying at Warmland, my dad called me and told me about this cool bike shop that was in town, called BikeWorks. He had heard of it because it was *also* funded by CMHA. What was different about this bike shop was that for free, someone could build their own bike out of parts and bikes that they had there, or work a certain number of hours to earn a brand new bike! Of course, I was very interested. We made arrangements for regular rides back and forth from Duncan to Ladysmith, since I live there.

Attached to the bike shop was a craft station for young children or *anyone*, really, to work on craft projects for free. I never got a chance with all the bike-building to do some things there, but I'm sure I will go back.

Going back and forth so much more often allowed me more visiting time with my dad. I got a chance to see just how amazing the homeless shelter was, and how many things they offered to the people staying there. They really work hard to get these people back into society and into the world with the rest of us. They offer so many programs, including community kitchens and gardens, and offer tons of services like a chiropractor and a nurse who visit regularly.

Finishing my bike took a lot longer than expected. We had quite a few setbacks with paint and the forks breaking and other things. It even went into the start of school, so I couldn't even go to the bike shop as often as I had been, and Daddy was starting to do some solo work on it to get it finished.

This one day, when I had *no idea* that anything special was going on, Michael Schratte wheeled into Duncan and did a presentation at BikeWorks with a barbeque and *everything!* He actually walked into the door just as the wheels and seat were put on the bike and Daddy said,



Mary welding



Mary meets Michael at BikeWorks

“Get on the bike! Quick!” So I did, not really knowing who Michael was yet, and Daddy was *super* excited. He was introducing and taking pictures and saying how fortunate it was that he would walk in that that very moment. I admit it was kind of a special thing for me too, not just meeting Michael, but having someone show off my bike to someone so important.

I guess my bike is noticed everywhere I go with it, though. It is a fluorescent orange chopper with a fuzzy black banana seat. We even custom-welded the forks, which was cool for me, since I had never operated a welding machine before that.

After Michael's speech, I understood why Daddy had been so excited to meet him. It was an awesome thing to hear that someone was riding around the world to erase the stigma from mental illness. I know my dad has ADD, and he usually never brought it up until after Michael's day at BikeWorks.

Daddy had to finish my bike by himself while I was at school eventually. I felt a little bit guilty for not being there, but I really did have to do my homework and other things, even on weekends, so it was *really* hard to get my mom to agree.

This one day, I got a phone call from Daddy. I think it was in late October, and he told me we had been offered a chance to go and ride with Michael Schratte on the final stretch of his campaign. CMHA was even going to give us the money for travel that we needed in order to go! I was nearly overwhelmed with the whole thing, actually. Nobody had ever offered me something like this before.

We had to get up at like 4 in the morning, but it was definitely worth it. I got tons of compliments on my bike, and Daddy was smiling the entire time. We even went into the after-thing inside the rink part of the Rogers Arena for the final speech and awards and thank-yous. Michael recognized us because we were the people with the orange chopper. That made me smile.

On the ferry home, late in the evening, Daddy told me that he was extremely proud of me. I think that that was definitely the most special part of the trip. And to think that it wouldn't have happened without CMHA. Warmland, BikeWorks, our travel money—they all were provided by CMHA.

Now my dad has even upgraded to a small apartment above the homeless shelter. People know him in there mostly from his working on the bike at the shelter when the bike shop was closed, and from him bringing me in to work on it after hours as well. I have seen and been a part of the greatness of CMHA and I am so thankful that they gave me the opportunity to ride with Michael. My dad is even more able to say how awesome CMHA is, since he is living in Warmland, and he was far more involved than I was. I am very grateful that I could build my bike and that I could go to Ride Don't Hide, and, most importantly, that my Daddy has somewhere to live for now, and food to eat, and clean water. I just want to send a huge thank you to CMHA for those things, which they provide for many other people.

This really has been a near life-changing experience for me, and I just want to end this article with a huge thank you to CMHA for letting me be a part of it.



Mary with her Dad and her orange chopper at Michael Schratte's homecoming in Vancouver, 2011



## Why I Ride by Candice

2012

I am riding to promote mental health awareness. As many of you know, my brother (Marc Edward Johnson ... Markle Sparkle) passed away in December. He took his life after struggling with depression.

I have struggled tremendously since his passing and began to find myself getting into a very dark hole. When my own dark thoughts began to cloud my mind, I knew that I had to make a change. I had to do something positive for myself and I took up cycling, completely unsure if I would even enjoy it.

Turns out ... I do. I love it and it has provided me with such a giant positive in my life. The energy and happiness I get from cycling is such a natural high and is more therapeutic than I ever would have thought. When Bike to Work Week began in Vancouver, I really wanted to partake, but I never thought I would make it. I decided (internally) to dedicate that week to Marc and use him as a driving force to get through the week. From there, I decided to take it a step further and decided I wanted to host a charity bike ride, in his name, to promote mental health.

When you look around for information and help in regards to mental health, there isn't nearly enough out there.

There is such a stigma on mental health and people hold it all in, for so many different reasons. Some are ashamed, some want help but don't know where to turn, some people aren't aware of what it is that they are feeling and experiencing, and some people simply can't afford to seek the help they need.

I want to change this. I want to make seeking help as routine as being tested for AIDS or prostate cancer ... things that were once only mentioned in whispers, yet now are so strongly encouraged! I want advertising to be highly visible and make seeking help something that everyone can have access to.

From my searches, I stumbled across CMHA and discovered that they will be hosting their 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Bike Ride to support mental health and it wasn't even a decision that I had to make. I'm in it! 110%. It's a touch terrifying that the ride takes place in 3 weeks, but I'm determined to complete the 50K ... I want to make Marc proud. I want to make sure he didn't die in vein and I want to help others that are in his position before it's too late! There is no health without mental health and I want to spread the word and make finding help more available to others who are struggling!

Thank you for your support, wish me luck!



## Meet Team Jake by Grant 2013

Team Jake was formed in May 2013 after Jake Eliopoulos passed away at the age of 21 from a battle with depression. A former Major League Baseball draft pick, Jake was a very outgoing person with a passion for baseball. He cared very much for his friends and family and lit up the world with his personality and his smile.

After Jake's passing, a friend of the family encouraged those close to Jake to participate in Ride Don't Hide to raise awareness about mental health and as a tribute to Jake. And so, Team Jake was formed as part of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) ride. The team consists of myself, team captain and Jake's best friend, father Jim, mother Lea, brother Derek and sister Zoe, and so many other extended family members and close friends.

Team Jake has been one of the top fundraising teams both in the GTA and in Canada for the past 3 years. One of the main reasons why Team Jake rides every year is that we feel it is a great way to honour and remember Jake for his fight with depression and mental health. Team

Jake wants to raise awareness and eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health. We have great memories of Jake and we want to let people know that there is hope. We know firsthand of the need for funding to improve mental health services and access.

I was with Jake during his time of suffering, knowing I was one of his only friends who knew that he was going through mental health challenges. During this time I found that my cottage was one of the few places Jake could be happy and be himself. When he was there I noticed a difference in Jake—he was a lot happier and able to go outside without fear to enjoy the wilderness.

Team Jake will continue to participate in the Canadian Mental Health Association's Ride Don't Hide in the GTA. Our team takes great pride in representing Jake and other people and families who have been affected by mental illness in Canada. This event is a way for people to start talking about the cause and encourages positive mental health for all.



**“One of the main reasons why Team Jake rides every year is that we feel it is a great way to honour and remember Jake for his fight with depression and mental health.”**

—Grant, Team Jake captain



Vanessa with MLA Richard Lee, MLA Jane Thornthwaite and Coquitlam Mayor Richard Stewart

## Speaking Out by Vanessa

2013

My name is Vanessa Stewart. I started talking about my mental illness at the 2013 Ride Don't Hide bicycle event. It was one of the rare times I had left the house to go anywhere that year, let alone to a mental health event. I hadn't spoken to anyone about my mental illness and was having trouble doing activities I once loved due to the onset of depression.

I didn't plan on telling anyone about my illness, and instead was very secretive about it, telling only my close friends and family. I had tremendous fear of being judged and looked down upon. Worries filled my mind, like what if I was singled out as the only one there with a mental illness.

We unloaded our bikes and entered the event, and I was blown away by hundreds of helmet-wearing participants, all wearing Ride Don't Hide bibs, most of which carried the name of a person they were riding for, a person they knew and loved with mental illness.

The ride was exhilarating. And shortly after we returned from the ride to the stadium, my dad was approached by a reporter. And as usually happens, the reporter asked him what the event meant to him and his community. As dad started to answer, I stepped out from behind him to speak: 'He's here because of me...I suffer from a mental

illness.' No one moved. No one said a word. I started to tell the reporter about my journey, and then dad asked me, 'Are you really ready for this, Vanessa?', and I replied, 'Yes...yes, I am.'

When my story came out in the paper a few days later, my sister and Dad posted it to my Facebook page. What happened next almost knocked me over.

My fears and trepidations were quickly replaced by different emotions entirely. All the comments were positive and encouraging. Never in my wildest dreams had I thought so many people would support me and want to help me in overcoming this disease, including some who acknowledged their own struggles. I felt free, liberated, like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

From that moment on, I blogged, did interviews and spoke about how I wish people would view mental illness as they would any other illness, so that those who suffer wouldn't do so alone. I recounted the real struggles I had been having with stigma and fears surrounding my mental health. I was open and honest about answering people's questions and didn't hold anything back. I wanted to make sure people were educated as I had not been. I started the discussion.



# RCMP Assistant Commissioner Gilles Moreau's Story

2015

RCMP Assistant Commissioner Gilles Moreau came forward with his personal story about mental health recovery in a video encouraging fellow Canadians and RCMP officers to join Ride Don't Hide. Moreau has experienced depression and suicidal thoughts; overcoming these challenges has inspired him to become the RCMP's National Champion for Mental Health. His story reached over 57,300 people on Facebook as it spread throughout the RCMP and across Canada.

Moreau believes that—while the public as a whole should be more open and accepting when it comes to mental illness—RCMP officers, in particular, often forget that acknowledging and facing mental health challenges is a marker of strength, not weakness.

"We are all human beings. Underneath these red tunics, the Red Serge, we are human beings first. Some of us will have mental health issues, whether it be in our private

life, or because of the stuff we see as police officers. I had issues with mental health," says Moreau.

"Because of our culture, our policing culture, where everyone has to be strong and be the superheroes, what I'm trying to do is break down that barrier."

Moreau feels empowered by his own experiences to spread the word about the importance of mental health recovery.

"I have been very successful at gaining back my mental health and having a balance in my life. I used exercise, I used defining the work that I wanted to do and always maintain my drive to be successful in my own life while I was serving Canadians."

**Watch RCMP Assistant Commissioner Gilles Moreau's story at [www.youtube/cmhabc](http://www.youtube/cmhabc)**

To date, Ride Don't Hide has generated nearly \$6 million towards essential mental health programs and services in communities, workplaces and schools—programs that change lives. Programs that save lives. The Ride Don't Hide movement aims to help overcome the stigma by creating a welcoming and inclusive community of hope and empowerment and to open up conversations around mental health.



ride don't hide

2018