

Trio travel Trans-Canada together

Posted By Craig Gilbert



Engineers Without Borders.

Packed full of pancakes, bacon, eggs, home fries, coffee and more than a couple pats of peanut butter, the trio of trans-Canada cyclists welcomed news of a hot spot for a cool banana split as if they had been starved for a week.

Their empty plates still in front of them at a table at Roger Rabbit's in Espanola, Dunnville's Kevin Glenney, Vancouver's Meaghan Hackinen and Edmonton's Toby Sheldon excitedly fantasized about what three flavours of Farquhar's ice cream they were going to enjoy under hot sauce and extra peanuts at Three Cows and a Cone in Little Current, (now) the next stop on their journey.

"Oh, those do look good," they breathed as two of Roger's famous poutines were delivered to the table opposite. "Look at the gravy!"

They rode 225 kilometres the day before, camping overnight in front of the Webbley Motel in Webbwood. They said they are always looking for the 5,000 or so calories they have to consume each day.

Funny thing is, though they happen to be traveling ensemble at the moment, the three riders didn't set out together. Glenney, a trilingual aerospace engineer raised on a berry farm who has worked in Minneapolis for the past decade, is riding across Canada to raise funds for the Huntington Society of Canada, and awareness for

The trio is just three members of the community of cyclists committed to crossing Canada in 2010. They said the group tends to bump into each other as they cross the country. At Velorution, a bike shop in Sault Ste. Marie with a reputation for helping out traveling cyclists, there were 14 people around the campfire on Monday evening.

The three first met in Saskatchewan and split in Winnipeg, when Glenney, 36, rode south through Minnesota and Michigan around the Great Lakes, and Hackinen and Sheldon took the high road through Northwestern Ontario.

"I'm loving every second of it," he laughed. "I think I'll just keep going when I'm done. Go around the world, maybe! That's about how I feel right now."

"I can't imagine any other life than this," Hackinen added, explaining that she relishes the freedom of an alarm clock-less summer.

"I wake up and I think 'Where am I? When am I? Then I remember it doesn't matter!" joked Sheldon.

As of his noon-hour breakfast on Tuesday, July 20, Glenney had raised over \$7,000 of his \$30,000 goal. He had completed just over half of his 8,300-km ride from Vancouver to Cape Spear, Nfld, the most easterly point of North America. He started June 4.

Huntington's Disease is an inherited brain disorder (parents have a 50-50 chance of passing it on to their children) that afflicts about one in 10,000 Canadians and affects about one in 1,000, whether they be family members, caregivers, friends or persons at risk of developing the disease themselves.

There are treatments for some of the symptoms, but there is no way to stop it. The disease leads to complete incapacitation and eventually death.

Several members of Glenney's family have or have had the disease. He said as he progresses through the provinces, he meets more and more people affected by Huntington's.

A woman of about 65 or 70 caught wind he was passing through Sault Ste. Marie the week previous, for example, and went out to the Michigan side to take him out for dinner. Then she bought breakfast the next day and paid his accommodation.

"Her husband had died from Huntington's about three years ago," he said. "She was so full of life, spry. I get funny stories, and sad stories."

He said his father wouldn't even talk about the disease until January of this year. Two of the four children in his family have it. He has no symptoms, but fears he will pass it on to his kids.

"We actually had a bit of a falling out over it, and that's ultimately what led to this ride," he said. "I had been thinking about a ride for about 12 years. I got in touch with the HSC in February.

Glennay has mounted an android phone and solar panel to his bike and keeps his GPS tracker on so his website followers can see where he is and how fast he's moving in real time. This has allowed him to keep statistics like distance traveled (2357 miles so far), longest one-day distance (131 m), top speed (47 m/h), and max cumulative daily vertical ascent (10832 ft).

He said the journey has been transformational.

"Engineers in general are kind of anti-social," he said. "I've become more talkative; to just go up to a person and start a conversation, I would have never done that before, or just knock on someone's door and ask to camp on their lawn. In Michigan and Wisconsin I didn't spend a dime of my own money. People looked after me."

Visit www.kevinglennay.com or www.huntingtonsociety.ca for more information and to donate.