



Community

Trans Canada trip raises money *Coast-to-coast journey will take over two months*

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Ilan Levy, 58, arrived in Powell River on Tuesday, June 7 with little more than a road bicycle, a GPS and about 7,950 kilometres of cycling ahead of him.

Levy, from Toronto, is cycling across Canada to raise awareness and ideally \$100,000 for the Ontario-based charity SchoolBOX. SchoolBOX started about six years ago as a charity to help children in Nicaragua attend school. The charity began by putting together school kits of pencils, paper and other supplies bound for Nicaragua. It now builds entire school rooms for children and if Levy meets his goal the money raised on his trip would build eight school rooms.

Levy became involved with the charity after meeting the organizers and donating to the organization. Levy already had in mind that he would like to bike across Canada, purely for his own challenge, but he came up with the idea to turn the trip into a fundraiser for SchoolBOX, giving him the extra incentive needed to hit the road.

"It feels very different to be riding with that as the background story compared to just riding on my own," said Levy. "The energy that I have around this has changed completely."

About three weeks before setting off on his epic bicycle ride Levy visited Nicaragua for the first time to see for himself the state of the country. Levy said that he spent about two years each in Iran and Ethiopia as a youth and that the poverty he saw in Nicaragua was as bad as anything he had previously witnessed. He also witnessed the difference made through the school supplies and schools donated by SchoolBOX.

Levy originally planned to cycle from Vancouver to St. John's, Newfoundland, for a total of about 7,600 kilometres, but after speaking to friends in North Vancouver decided to add the Sunshine Coast and Vancouver Island to the route because "we decided that 8,000 [kilometres] sounded better."

The Powell River stage came on Tuesday, June 7, day two of Levy's trip, which will take until August 26 to complete. Levy and a friend biked up from Vancouver to Roberts Creek on day one, continuing on to Powell River the next morning. Levy said he enjoyed the ride immensely and the only complaints he had were the hill right after Saltery Bay and that the "stunning vistas" were too distracting.

"I just kept stopping and taking photographs, which is not conducive to finishing your day," said Levy.

This portion of the trip will have the shortest days of riding for Levy. He plans to average about 130 kilometres per day equalling about six or seven hours of riding. He will be camping along the way but every sixth day will be a rest day, meaning no cycling, a real bed to sleep in and access to laundry facilities.

The main portion of Levy's journey will begin on June 16 at which point he will be joined by five other cyclists unrelated to his cause for the trip. His ride has been organized through Cycle Canada, an organization that brings together cyclists and provides support for cycling tours. It is organizing campsites, providing two meals a day and hauling gear, allowing Levy to focus primarily on his cycling and on the cause that is his inspiration.

"Once you've met the volunteers, the staff and the kids, the value of that, that's going to be my tailwind," said Levy. "When it gets really hard that's what's going to keep me going."



LONG ROAD AHEAD: Cyclist Ilan Levy made a stop in Powell River on Tuesday, June 7 on day two of his ride across Canada raising awareness and funds for charity.

Levy is keeping a blog on his journey for supporters to follow, keep track of where he is and see how the trip is going. He will be posting photographs, videos and the site provides links to donate to SchoolBOX. Interested readers can visit Levy's [website](#) to keep track of his trip.

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