



Owen's Inspiration and Point of View

Talking to Owen, a regular volunteer at Bumpin, was delightful and inspiring. Currently in grade twelve and attending Vancouver College, he heard about Bumpin through his school's football team. His preconceptions of the Downtown Eastside were from a neutral point of view; his ideas came from experience alone, bussing through that area only to glance out the window and observe the forlorn faces of those people who were simply there, stuck there and always there. He felt no personal connection with what felt to him like a general group of people, people part of a culture distant yet so close to home. He thought taking advantage of an opportunity such as Bumpin would lend him exposure to that part of his hometown he never tangibly experienced growing up, and upon reflecting, after becoming a crucial face of the team, he realized he gained much more than that.



*"(from left to right) Nico, Ryan, Isiah, Alex, and Owen at one of our Sunday Handouts"*

Owen started to become acquainted with regulars through unique interactions. He got to hear a wide range of stories residents would gracefully tell him, from the painful, heartbreaking, melancholy recounts of the past, to joyous observations about lessons learned and happy twists of fate. Everybody held their own individual stories and takes on life, quickly imprinting the conclusion in Owen's mind that people living on the Downtown Eastside are not of one category, one nature, one label: they are a

collection of singular people who only share a living space, people with more differences than similarities who chose to form a community to help and rely on one other.

These interactions resulted in the formation of friendships and bonds, an unspoken trust arising between guests and Bumpin, which extends to every volunteer, including Owen, that Bumpin's aim is to provide aid, momentary ease and friendly faces to every person that takes time out of their day to visit. Owen recognizes the benefit in forming relationships with every person he talks to, and that understanding the people of the Downtown Eastside are just like everywhere else, unable to be represented by stereotypes, makes his view on the world, and especially his hometown, wider and more dynamic. These people are not unapproachable people from the other side of a bus window; they are friendly, kind individuals who just want to talk.

Owen has also molded friendships with a variety of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds, people he said he would never have interacted with if it wasn't for this project bringing such a diverse group of people together who have the same goal of helping people. Bumpin's environment entices him to come back every Sunday for new and familiar faces, for the people and stories and smiles, the strength of this influence encouraging Owen to slot Bumpin into his future plans. Everybody he meets plants another face in his mind that shapes the Downtown Eastside from an abstract concept into a welcoming gathering of friends, and he wants his stories and perspectives gained through participation in Bumpin to shape a realistic picture for those who are still trapped with harmful stereotypes and misconceptions regarding the Downtown Eastside. He knows Bumpin provides the teamwork and platform to help him make this difference in whatever way he can, and the friends he has made on his journey support him in this initiative. Thank you for your words Owen, it was a pleasure talking with you.

By: Keeley Aliya