

A Vision for A Greater City

Toronto filmmaker Rohan J. Bader wants to inspire peace and love

JENNIFER SANASIE

When walking around the streets of Toronto, it is evident to see from the many displays of art influenced by different cultures from around the world that the city takes pride in its multi-cultural community.

Rohan J. Bader has devoted his career to working with multi-media art to provoke awareness within the city of Toronto. A 27-year-old Torontonian who dedicates his work to portraying unity amongst cultures through art, Rohan is the father of the production company Earthtone Pictures, and has directed ten films to date. Rohan's films are short, averaging about five minutes in length. They portray different forms of media, such as art, poetry, and dance, and

all share the theme of peace and love.

Rohan describes himself as idealistic, saying that his two biggest heroes are John Lennon and Gandhi. "Certain leaders have a vision and see it through, and if they're right, people will follow them," he says.

"We have the ability to communicate through culture, love, and art."

Idolizing the charisma and drive that both Lennon and Gandhi had in their quest to promote peace, Rohan hopes that people will follow him on his journey to bring cultures together through media. "All of my films are centered around Peace and Love; it's something I'm not personally seeing a lot of these days," Rohan says as he begins to describe his latest project, *Utopia*.

The film *Utopia* is based around a song, the refrain of

which is: "People of the sun, understand that we are one." Explaining that he chose to center this movie around the sun because it is an international symbol that everyone can recognize, Rohan thrives on the notion that everyone from every corner of the earth can connect with his films. "Art is a universal language," he says. "Everyone can understand it."

In the future Rohan hopes to promote other artists, and see some kind of change when it comes to mainstream music and music videos.

"When you listen to the radio, it's irritating and appalling at times. The music industry is so sex driven these days," he explains. "People need to hear more positive and uplifting things." His mission is to take constructive thoughts and make them into something that can be socially accepted in mainstream media.



Rohan Bader and his tools of the trade
photo courtesy Owen Scott

Rohan hopes to take Canada's multi-cultural voice and communicate it throughout the world. "We have the ability to communicate through culture, love, and art," he says. "I will continue to emphasize the positive side of life."



Jennifer Sanasie is a freelance journalist in Toronto

Giving the Gift of Literacy



Sandy Collie assisted by Bonnie Mills

Learners gain more than the ability to read

JORDAN CHITTLEY

"This morning I got on this bus and it said Coxwell and Queen and I read it real clearly to myself," says Sandy Collie, a Frontier College student. Only a few short years ago, Sandy couldn't read a single word. Now with the help of her tutors at Frontier College, not only is Sandy using her new-found reading skills to get around the city, but she is also volunteering with the Brownies.

"We go to the subway station, the one on Pape, to sell Girl Guide cookies... and I take them camping," says Sandy as she lifts her chin a little higher and the smile on her face grows from ear to ear.

When Sandy first came she was a shy girl, says program director and 21-year veteran of Frontier College Susan Macdonald. "And I don't think [she is] anything like that person now."

"It makes me feel good, it makes me feel proud," Sandy says when talking about how she can now email her friends and family and take her mother to doctor's appointments.

"With self confidence and with safety, feeling comfortable with your tutor, your natural talents come out."

"Sandy does a lot of care in her family. Sandy is the rock," says Susan. "Her family depends on Sandy."

Tom Christou is another learner working alongside a tutor on his literacy and computer skills in the hopes of increasing his employment opportunities.

Tom recently delivered a public speech during a fundraiser for Frontier. "I thought there was no way I could do it ... it gave me big confidence to speak to people."

Tom used to go to high school, but he says it wasn't really helpful. Then, just over four years ago, his sister found out about Frontier. "I'm learning more now ... now I'm learning computers ... my tutor is teaching me how to email. It's opened up my life a lot."

While Susan has 64 students in her program including Sandy and Tom, Frontier College volunteers work with over 14,000 participants across Canada.

Susan is the coordinator for the Independent Studies program. It is a community-based adult literacy program that provides learning opportunities for people with disabilities in the downtown area. The goal is to help students improve their self-confidence and personal independence so

they can move on to other educational, employment, or life opportunities.

"[We are] recognizing them as having values and starting to build confidence," says Bonnie Mills, who has been volunteering for the past 13 years. "It has been a very powerful thing in my life."

According to Susan, Bonnie, and other volunteers, it's not just about teaching these students how to read; it is about the one-on-one interaction between tutors and students that allows the students to feel comfortable, which improves confidence. She says there is no standard program, each lesson is tailored to the particular learner.

"When there is a boost in self confidence there is a change in things they are able to do, things they are willing to do," says Susan. "With self confidence and with safety, feeling comfortable with your tutor, your natural talents come out."

Teaching people how to read is how Frontier was started 110 years ago. It was founded by a small group of university students who went to the frontiers of Canada to teach people working in logging camps, mining towns, and rail gangs. While they continue this part of the program

with volunteers working with migrant workers on farms across the country, the frontiers of literacy have changed to include at-risk youth, people living with disabilities, and much more. They work in partnership with other organizations to improve literacy rates wherever they can. And while illiteracy may not seem like a problem, they say that 42% of Canadians experience reading difficulties.

As for Sandy and Tom, Sandy plans to continue helping the 7- and 8-year-old Brownies get their badges, and Tom is hoping to improve his employment opportunities. He currently works at Tim Horton's, and he says, "When I finish here, I want to finish high school and then I want to go to Centennial College and get into management and sales."



Jordan Chittley is a Toronto-based journalist who wrote his Master's thesis on positive reporting and its effect on wellbeing