

## **Culture Corner**

**\*\*Disclaimer the amount of names, faces, spots and stories are endless. We're opening the door and scratching at the surface. This is something we should build upon as time goes on as the stories need to be told and our history is deep, vast and full of passion - Adam Hopkins**

### **Scene Building/Iconic Spots**

#### **The Big O, Montreal**

In the heart of Montreal, Canada, stands the Big O, a 50-foot-long concrete whistle born from the 1976 Summer Olympics. These concrete curves created a perfect halfpipe structure and for 35 years, it has been a sanctuary for skateboarders worldwide, offering thrilling speed lines and daring transitions.

But in 2010, the community faced a grave threat: the expansion of a nearby soccer stadium loomed, threatening to erase their beloved spot.

Faced with the prospect of losing their cherished skate haven, skaters like Barry Walsh and Marc Tison refused to let their piece of history fade away. Armed with a book chronicling the spot's renegade skate history, they approached Joey Saputo, president of the Montreal Impact soccer team, for assistance. To their amazement, Saputo embraced their cause, vowing to relocate the 175-ton structure to safety.

The skaters' persistence paid off as the Big O was carefully loaded onto a massive gurney and moved 100 feet to a new location. Despite the hefty cost, exceeding \$100,000, the community banded together to ensure the preservation of their temple. Now, with the Big O poised to reclaim its place in skate lore, plans are underway for a grand reopening celebration, featuring live bands and an epic jam session.

Through perseverance and collaboration, the skate community of Montreal triumphed over adversity, securing the future of their beloved Big O for generations of skaters to come.

Big O - Documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWL1CFMj368>

Big o Masher Edit (Ripping Skating) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0RjFPdtUfl>

#### **Seylynn Bowl North Vancouver**

Seylynn Skatepark, built in 1978, stands as Canada's oldest surviving skatepark. It's concrete snake run ending in a bowl is a legendary piece of concrete in the skateboarding world. In the early 80's as many skateparks in the USA closed and were tore down due to their pay to play model, Seylynn stood strong as a free public facility for any skater to use. With frequent visits from traveling pros, teams and skaters from the USA coming through. During Expo 86, international pros competed on it's curves with Chris Miller gracing the cover of Thrasher magazine. Solidifying Seylynn's global reputation. The Bowl Series on Canada Day is also the longest-running skate gathering in Canada. Seylynn continues to inspire skaters of all levels, maintaining its status as legendary insane terrain.

For more on the Seylynn Story watch the documentary linked here -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkeicykLT6E>

## **Vancouver Skate Plaza**

Nestled beneath the Georgia Street and Dunsmuir viaducts, at the intersection of Union St. and Quebec St., lies the Vancouver Skate Plaza, a haven for skateboarders in the heart of British Columbia's bustling metropolis. Established in 2004 through years of hard work and advocacy by the Vancouver Skateboard Coalition, this skatepark stands as a pioneering testament to urban skateboarding culture, embodying the essence of street skating within a purpose-built environment.

Designed and built by New Line Skateparks in collaboration with local skaters, the Vancouver Skate Plaza reimagines the cityscape, drawing inspiration from the vibrant urban plazas synonymous with downtown cores worldwide. Its layout intricately weaves together elements reminiscent of street skating, featuring handrails, ledges, and stairs strategically positioned to emulate the challenges of navigating through an urban landscape. What sets the Vancouver Skate Plaza apart is its meticulous attention to detail, with every feature carefully crafted to mirror iconic street spots both locally and internationally. From the rugged granite edging that replicates the authenticity of genuine street environments to the meticulously placed obstacles mirroring famous skating landmarks, every aspect of the plaza is a homage to the dynamic spirit of street skateboarding.

More than just a recreational facility, the Vancouver Skate Plaza serves as a sanctuary for skateboarders who have often found themselves marginalized or excluded from traditional urban spaces. By providing a dedicated space tailored to their needs, the plaza fosters a sense of community and belonging among skateboarders, offering a platform for self-expression and creativity.

Situated in an urban area, the plaza's strategic location beneath the viaducts adds to its allure, offering some shelter from the elements while amplifying the urban ambiance that permeates the area. Against the backdrop of towering infrastructure, skateboarders are free to skate the urban plaza without the fear of being chased by security guards or dealing with law enforcement.

The significance of the Vancouver Skate Plaza extends beyond its physical presence, symbolising the intersection of sport, art, and urban culture. It stands as a testament to the resilience and creativity of skateboarders, who, with the support of the community, have transformed an underutilised space into a vibrant hub of activity and expression.

As the first street plaza skatepark in Vancouver, this iconic landmark continues to inspire generations of skateboarders, serving as a reminder of the power of community and the enduring appeal of urban skateboarding culture. With each kickflip, grind, and ollie, the Vancouver Skate Plaza reaffirms its status as a cornerstone of the city's skateboarding scene, a living testament to the spirit of innovation and adventure that defines the sport.

## Richmond Skate Ranch

In the vibrant era of skateboarding in the 1980s, one place stood out as a haven for skaters in Vancouver: the Richmond Skate Ranch. Founded in 1986 by Canada's first pro skater and visionary Kevin Harris, this skateboarding sanctuary became more than just a park – it was a cornerstone of the local skateboarding community and a hub of innovation and camaraderie. The Richmond Skate Ranch made its mark right from the start by hosting the Expo vert ramp from the Vancouver Expo '86 vert contest. It was a monumental event that drew skaters from all over, showcasing the park's potential and setting the stage for years of skateboarding excitement to come.

One of the defining features of the Ranch was the mini Chin ramp, a creation designed by the legendary Lance Mountain. Its innovative design, complete with a killer wall ride, made it an instant favourite among skaters. For many, including yourself, it remains a standout memory of those early skateboarding days.

The Ranch wasn't just a place to skate – it was a destination. You vividly recall the excitement of travelling there with your buddies from Coquitlam, braving the long bus ride to immerse yourselves in the vibrant skateboarding culture of Richmond. Along the journey, you encountered fellow skaters and visiting pros sharing stories and anticipation for the contests ahead.

As the years went by and the Ranch moved to its second location, its legacy only grew stronger. The new layout, meticulously designed by Kevin Harris, seamlessly connected ramps through hips and spines, creating an environment that fostered creativity and progression.

The Skate Ranch helped create future skateboarding pros like Rob Sluggo Boyce, Colin McKay, and Rick Howard alongside visiting international pros honed their skills, leaving their mark on the Richmond Skate Ranch and the skateboarding world at large. There was countless NBD's (Never been done tricks) invented and filmed at the ranch during a heavy bridging of street skating tech into the vert environment.

While the ranch officially closed its doors in 1992 leaving a long standing gap that continues to this day for indoor facilities in the Greater Vancouver Area. For those that rode its ramps, the Richmond Skate Ranch will forever hold a special place. It was more than just a skatepark – it was a home, a sanctuary, and a source of endless inspiration. And for any involved, along the ride, consider yourselves truly blessed to have been a part of it.

Colin McKay Virtual Reality Part (time stamped to the ranch clips running from 1:07-2:45) -

 Colin McKay Plan B Virtual Reality 1993

Tour of the skate ranch in 1987

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/131159236946943/permalink/4612387868824035/?mibextid=c7yyfP>

**Next Up**

La Taz (90's) Montreal

Nations (awaiting Nations board meeting for approval) Can do a small piece in the mean time)

Importance of DIY Leaside, Projet 45

### **Tool Kit (data to be entered)**

- Rock transfers, rock fakies (Can Opener) why to clear your truck on re entry
- Frontside Indy X - why an indy is only backside (history, story etc)
- Why it is called the Madonna
- Kneeslide's
- Tuckknee and why

### **Influential Canadian Skaters**

#### **Lisa Wietzki**

Lisa's skateboarding journey began around 1986/1987 when she became intrigued by the sport while dating a guy who owned a board. One day, opting to avoid a walk to the corner store, she hopped on his board barefoot, dressed in a hippie skirt. The sensation of freedom and cruising immediately captivated her, igniting a passion that would endure.

For three months, she skated solo from point A to B until encountering a friend downtown, which led her to join a crew. Together, they spent entire days tearing through parkades, unaware of the vibrant skateboarding culture and camaraderie that awaited.

Inspired by footage of Cara-Beth Burnside, Lisa eventually met her idol and even participated in skate demos together, including a memorable one at the Los Angeles County Fair. "due to the nature of the sport I finally met Cara-Beth. We skated numerous times together in 1992. I did a skate demo with her at the Los Angeles County Fair. She made me sit with her signing posters for little girls at a booth. It was the coolest thing ever!"

Her progress received a significant boost from the World Fair in Vancouver, Expo 86, which featured a Transworld skateboarding contest. Although Lisa missed the event, she later relished skating on the contest ramp relocated to Kevin Harris's "The Ranch" in Richmond, where she honed her vert skills. It was huge! I learned to 'really' ride vert on it. Kevin was so supportive of me."

Vert skateboarding became Lisa's passion, where she savoured the speed and weightless sensation it offered. Despite facing initial patronising attitudes from male skaters, she quickly proved herself on the ramps, shattering stereotypes along the way.

Lisa's journey intersected with the world of filmmaking when she was invited to skate in a movie, providing her with a glimpse into the enchanting realm of cinema. Though she missed its theatrical release, the experience left an indelible mark on her journey.

Meanwhile, Lisa's acquaintance Samantha embarked on her own filmmaking endeavors, garnering accolades for her work before transitioning into acting and relocating to Los Angeles.

Lisa's skateboarding journey was not without its challenges, as not all male counterparts embraced her progress. Undeterred, she navigated the scene independently, mentoring young skateboarders and making a lasting impact.

One cherished memory was hosting California skaters at her Vancouver home, showcasing her hospitality and fostering camaraderie within the skateboarding community.

Today, Lisa resides on Vancouver Island, where she continues to skate concrete parks and bowls, reminiscing about the days of vert ramps while treasuring the memories she has created along the way.

For more on her story <https://womxnskatehistory.ca/2022/04/07/lisa-jak-wietzke/>

## **Alex Chalmers**

Alex Chalmers' impact on skateboarding extends far beyond his achievements on the competition circuit. Renowned for his versatility and fearless approach, he epitomised the ethos of "skating everything." From the steep hills of his North Vancouver neighbourhood to massive airs and gaps on the international stage, Chalmers left an indelible mark on the Canadian park and bowl scene.

Alex Chalmers' journey in skateboarding began in 1983 when he first stepped onto a skateboard at the age of eight. Growing up in North Vancouver, he quickly fell in love with the sport, finding solace and excitement in navigating the steep hills of his neighbourhood, the Richmond Skate Ranch, Seylynn and Griffin bowls. Chalmers gave up snowboarding because he was skating down massive hills on his paper route daily and had no need to make it up the chair lift when he lived on a concrete mountain, setting the stage for a lifetime of fearless exploration on his board.

His dedication and talent eventually caught the attention of the skateboarding world, leading to a professional career that saw him turn pro for Flip Skateboards in 2002. Frequently featured in international magazines, pro videos and was graced on the cover of the biggest skate magazines of the time. As a mainstay on the international circuit, Chalmers became a constant face on the Tony Hawk's Gigantic Skatepark Tour, showcasing his skills on skateparks all over the globe.

Today, Alex Chalmers continues to leave his mark on the skateboarding world as part owner, team manager, and pro for Pylon Skateboards. Despite his busy schedule, he can still be frequently spotted skating around Montana and the greater Vancouver area, where he inspires others with his passion, creativity, and unwavering dedication skateboarding and the community he loves.

“Skate Everything – Alex Chalmers”

20/20 Alex Chalmers Part <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AAvV69tqBA>

### **Next Up (will slim down or swap names)**

Gailea Momolu

Chris Haslam

Colin Mckay

Paul Machnau or Jon West

Woman street skater (Alison Matasi?)

### **History (Data to be entered)**

- Why is skateboarding different than other activities (redefining the environment)
- The skateboard is canadian - 7 ply skateboard was invented in Canada, canadian hard rock maple is the standard for board construction
- Wee Willi Winkles - <https://www.mountainlifemedia.ca/2014/07/wee-wonder-the-legend-of-wee-willi-winkles/>
- Creating your own reality skatepark advocacy, community groups etc