



## East Coast Street Styles/ Surface Skateshop

To those in the skateboarding world, it's no secret that there is a skating hub located right in Riverview. But many people are still surprised to hear about the Riverview Skatepark & Youth Centre let alone all of the associated businesses centred at 145 Lakeside Dr., behind the Byron Dobson Arena.

East Coast Street Styles Skateboard Sessions (or simply EC4S) and Surface Skateshop are run by Ross Smith out of the town-owned indoor skatepark. A Riverview native, Ross never imagined when he started skating in 1987 that he would one day be a mentor to youth in the town three decades later.

We invited Ross to chat with us this week about the skatepark, his unique relationship with the Town of Riverview and how a small indoor skatepark is having a major impact on the world of skateboarding.

1. Hey Ross, tell us a bit about how East Coast Street Styles Skateboard Sessions and Surface Skateshop came to be and what the many parts of the business are.

I started skating here in Riverview in 1987 and grew up surrounded by skateboarding, snowboarding and punk rock. Having done well in school, the societal 'norm' was to enter university into a science program. I quickly realized that science was not for me. Still skating every day, I figured if I was going to spend so much on my education that I may as well try to centre it on something I love.

Halfway through my first semester I changed courses to Recreation Management and soon after created my first skate camp program as part of my practicum. This was when East Coast Street Styles was born as a company. The first three years the company provided camps for half a dozen separate communities throughout the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia. After graduating, I relocated back to Riverview and, as fate had it, the Town was in the process of getting a permanent facility set up.

They were also looking for outside expertise to help them with management, programming, design etc. This is when EC4S created a home base here in Riverview – where it all began so many years before. Since then the company has organized hundreds of events, taught over 6,000 young skaters in the past decade and a half, and traveled as far as Ontario providing top quality skate programming.

In addition to private programs we also teamed up with Anglophone East School District to help with skate programming they were implementing into their phys ed curriculum. I personally trained many of the phys ed

teachers in the area which was an amazing experience for someone who was often deemed an “outcast” for so many years in the past.

In the past few years we have expanded into creating our design/construction business (we’ve built more than half a dozen concrete park layouts to date) and also opened our retail location Surface Skateshop located right here inside the indoor park.

## 2. Describe the unique partnership you have with the Town of Riverview.

The company has had an amazing relationship with the town for almost a decade and a half now. It is a win/win situation where we shared our experience in the skateboard world while the town provided us an amazing 'home base' with the ability to host programs and events year round.

At the time we opened, indoor skateparks were an unknown entity with very few other facilities to use as a sample market. EC4S and Surface would never have become what they are today without the Town of Riverview’s facility and support. We are eternally grateful to have been born and raised in such a supportive community.

## 3. What might surprise people about the shop, skatepark, etc?

That we exist! At this point in time our most common reaction is “I had no idea this place even existed.” Once people find out about us, they quickly realize how amazing of a facility we have. We get most new customers through positive referrals. To have a supervised skatepark/youth centre with highly trained staff, amazing programs, a canteen, and a skateshop all under one roof is amazing. If I had this place when I was a kid, who knows how many more skateboarders would have a career in the industry by now. We have had kids start here at the age of 6, progress through volunteering and become junior instructors to later become paid instructors, who are now looking at potential lifetime careers in the skate world ... it's amazing!

In terms of the store, most customers are surprised that they can purchase clothing and footwear at a location here in Riverview. We also get a lot of product that is exclusive to our shop based on the fact that we are a core local shop. Often we get products that you can't get in the mall due to the fact that the bigger companies realize that it is hard to compete with big box locations. They provide us exclusives to draw in customers. So next time you are looking for that fresh pair of shoes that not every second person is wearing, stop in and we'll get you hooked up!

## 4. Any local products available?

We love to support local. We have local board companies, local skateboard wax companies, local hip hop artist albums, and have recently started stocking local Kendamas, a ball and cup-type toy that is huge with kids today. Two of these companies are run by 14 year old teens who live right here in Riverview! We wouldn't expect local support without giving back! We try to do as much as we can for local charities and currently the shop sponsors 10 riders locally and nationally.

## 5. Anything you would like to add?

Huge thanks to the Town of Riverview for the many years of support and partnership. We would also like to thank the citizens of Riverview, Moncton and Dieppe who support us and trust us to support their children and youth through our programs and support services.

Aside from that, we look forward to meeting any new customers and hope we can give back for another decade and a half. Remember, for every \$1 you spend locally, over 70 per cent stays in our local economy! Support local!