



Michael Schratte is appealing for the return of his \$4,000 Focus carbon-fibre bike, stolen near Kamloops.

— SUBMITTED PHOTO

Trekker's bike stolen in B.C.

BY IAN AUSTIN
THE PROVINCE

He's cycled nearly 40,000 kilometres — the circumference of the earth — on behalf of the mentally ill.

But as Vancouver teacher/journalist Michael Schratte returned to his home province, the borrowed, \$4,000 Focus carbon-fibre bike that's made it around the world went missing.

"It's quite ironic, isn't it?" said a world-weary Schratte. "I'm very protective of my bike — it's been like my wife for the last 18 months."

"I'm always having discussions at hotels or restaurants. I tell them my bike's coming inside, and if they don't like it I move on."

Schratte was getting ready for another cycling stint near Kamloops when he and his support crew made a last-minute decision to make a coffee run.

One small problem — they took the bike out of the van, and forgot to return it before they drove five kilometres down the road for coffee.

"We realized it almost right away," said Schratte. "We were only gone 10 minutes. Someone's enjoying a very nice little bike."

So Schratte, who has got by on the kindness of strangers, is hoping for one more unexpected act of kindness — the return of his bike.

"We're running on five or six hours of sleep a night," said Schratte, trying to explain his miscue. "We're exhausted, mistakes happen. One can only hope that most people are good people."

Schratte will zigzag across the province on backup bikes to get to 40,000 km, and hopes to end his "Ride Don't Hide" marathon triumphantly in Vancouver on Nov. 12. He's hoping to raise \$100,000 for mental-health programs for young people.

For more details on his trek, go to www.ridedonhide.com.

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Police swoops failed women, inquiry told

BY SUZANNE FOURNIER
THE PROVINCE

Attempts to curb Vancouver's street-based prostitution by arresting participants only served to criminalize women and failed to keep them safe.

Those were among the strong messages delivered to the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry this week.

Police swooped down in the 1990s to arrest not only women communicating for the purposes of prostitution but also their male customers.

"One group of people was subjected to criminalization and another group was diverted out of

the justice system altogether," noted Simon Fraser University criminologist and prostitution researcher John Lowman on Thursday.

Lowman said 38 per cent of women were convicted and sent to prison or given probation, thus branding them as criminals and adding to their rapsheet, while only three per cent of their male customers ever got convicted.

"For the men, it might mean losing a day of work, paying an attorney and attending john school where a moral story passed as education," said Lowman.

The women received harsher consequences and were driven to more isolated and dangerous areas

to work.

"There was no john school," said Lowman.

As for the lack of trust several witnesses have reported between police and prostitutes, Lowman noted that 83 per cent of street-level prostitutes did not report crime or trauma to the police.

About 63 per cent of prostitutes indicated they had not accessed any police services in the prior six months; 44 per cent believed police would not help; 34 per cent did not trust police; and 25 per cent avoided police at all costs.

Vancouver police lawyer Tim Dickson noted that although the VPD made hundreds of arrests a

year in the 1990s under communicating for the purposes of prostitution laws, police are no longer criminalizing street-level prostitutes.

"These days, there are extremely few charges against sex-trade workers laid by the VPD," said Dickson, noting charges have "declined dramatically."

The inquiry is looking at VPD conduct from Jan. 23, 1997, and Feb. 5, 2002, the day that convicted serial killer Robert Pickton was arrested.

Sex workers disappeared for decades, despite evidence implicating Pickton.

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