

Author tries to heal through words and pictures

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SAINT JOHN - Mark Zelinski's books are in the hands of people across the world.

 ENLARGE PHOTO



Mark Zelinski, photographer and owner of From the Heart Publishing, poses with two of his books. Zelinski will be at the Indigo book store at East Point tonight to donate some of his books to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saint John and First Steps Housing. Photo: Submitted

In Canada, some of his books are sold by charities as a fundraiser.

A world away in Hong Kong, children who are rescued from brothels are given Zelinski's book Untitled as a gift.

Untitled is a collection portraits of people from a myriad of cultures and because there are no words, there's no language barrier for the children to overcome.

Tonight, Zelinski will make sure his books are in the hands of Saint John children when he donates some of them to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saint John and First Steps Housing.

The freelance photographer and owner of From the Heart Publishing will donate the books during an event at the East Point Indigo store tonight from 7 to 9 p.m.

During this time, Zelinski will also sign copies of his books and share stories he's acquired while travelling to some of the planet's most remote corners.

He has already held similar events throughout eastern Canada and will wrap up his trip throughout the Maritimes on Sunday.

"I just decided this would be a good time of the year to visit the Maritimes and see a bit of the country as well," Zelinski said.

Deanna Gamble, a spokeswoman with Big Brothers Big Sisters Saint John, said the children from her organization will be able to appreciate an art form they wouldn't otherwise have access to through Zelinski's books.

"It gives them an idea of an art form and culture that they may not necessarily experience through school," she said.

"We're very excited and feel very honoured to be the recipient of this donation."

The three books Zelinski is donating took him about 35 years to complete.

"They've been a labour of love for most of my life," he said.

His first book, One Small Flame, focuses on the education philosophy of Kurt Hahn. Zelinski travelled to more than 70 schools across the world, including United World Colleges and Outward Bound schools, while taking photos for the book.

"Whenever I can, I try to promote (United World Colleges and Outward Bound schools) because I think it's such an important thing," Zelinski said.

In addition to being distributed to rescued children in Hong Kong, Zelinski's second book, Untitled, is used by grief counsellors in Canada and in orphanages across the world.

"I started shooting that book in 1975 and I really didn't know where it would take me but I just wanted to take pictures of people for different cultures," Zelinski said.

"It's really amazing how many applications this book has because it is a book with no words and it's a book of people from all over the world."

Zelinski travelled to villages and lived with the people he photographed.

"I knew a few years into that book that I really probably couldn't sell it because so many people in the

book are so poor that it would be obscene to profit using their photos," he said.

"I decided a while ago that I would donate that or use it as a fundraiser for charities."

Zelinski also printed 3,500 copies of his third book, *From the Field*, specifically to give away to charities.

The Oakville, Ont., native caught the travel bug after working in the Caribbean as a photographer for travel brochures.

"The more travelling I did, the more I loved to travel, especially to very different cultures and remote parts of the world.

"I've always found that in the rural areas, people are the most poor, the most helpful and the most generous."

The 56-year-old has learned from his travels that, in the poorest countries, it's the children who often suffer the most.

"If there are people suffering in other countries, if there's anything that I can do to help, I feel that I should do it."

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