

Dylan Bodnar's Fascinating Business

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It was just before Halloween when I came to Dylan's house. His home was decked out with spooky décor but little did I know the true gems that were in store!

ICOF Employer, Dylan Bodnar, graciously welcomed me into his home to talk about his business, *Dylan's Dabblings & Stonewear*. *Dylan's Dabblings & Stonewear* has been running strong for nine years now. It focuses on hand-painted garden statues, a variety of crafts, jewellery, and most impressively - rocks and precious stones.

When I asked Dylan how his passion for rocks developed he replied, "My Dad's a diamond driller so it kind of runs in the family". Dylan and his family travel all across Canada hunting for precious stones of all sorts. They love finding fossils and as Dylan says, his Mom "finds fossilized wood like a metal detector and he finds Souris Agate like a magpie". Dylan has acquired an impressive collection of stones and during our conversation he would mention a stone, whether it was amethyst or petrified wood, and then bring that stone out of a large bin to show me which one it was.

Dylan has been lucky to have many mentors along the way, like his parents and Mr. Williams, the gentleman who sold Dylan a lot of his first rocks and taught him about rock polishing. Rock polishing is essential and valuable to Dylan and his business. The rock polisher at Dylan's house never gets a rest - he uses it every day, almost 24/7. Each batch of rocks needs to go through up to four different rounds of polishing, each round consists of baking soda and different "grits" which are all different levels of coarseness. The most difficult part of rock polishing is waiting for it to be done. Sometimes, it can take up to four weeks depending on the softness of the rock.

Dylan is extremely innovative. He always comes up with new ideas for products that he can make and sell. One creative product is the holiday decorations he makes out of

burnt out light bulbs which he paints and puts on a string. Dylan says, "If you have dead bulbs give them to me!".

As Dylan has grown more established in the craft and stoneware community, he has developed a base of customers who rely on him to provide polished stones which they use in their crafting businesses. He even has one regular customer who purchases stones to create fairy houses. Dylan frequently participates in craft sales such as the *Teulon Night Market* and *Mall in the Hall*. He also has his work displayed in the local café *From Farm House to Yours* and he supplies his wares to a local shop called *Finders Keepers*. Dylan is extremely generous. He frequently donates his creations as prizes for contests and fundraisers. For example, he donated a painted bird house and homemade bird seed as prizes for Innovative LIFE Options' 2021 Summer Contest.

Dylan is a great salesman who isn't afraid to make a bold impression or take on new opportunities. He always thinks of new ways to market his products. At the Teulon Night Market he was successful in attracting customers with his dragon lights and by giving out free "troll treasure bags" (bags of small, polished rocks). In fact, news of his very successful table of wares made its way into the local newspaper! Dylan promotes his business by attending local markets and passing out his business cards. He is a well-known, active member of his community and of the Mineral Society of Manitoba which also makes it easy for him to promote his business by word-of-mouth. Annually, he hosts a yard sale that attracts customers from the Teulon area and beyond.

When I asked if Dylan experienced any struggles in starting and managing his own business, he said that rock identification can be very challenging. Known as a local rock guru, people often bring him rocks and ask him to identify them. Since many rocks look similar, it is not unusual for him and his team to spend several hours researching rocks on the internet.

Dylan shared with me that the key to his success is that he is very passionate about rocks and about his entire business. He says that you really have to love what you do if

you're going to run a successful business. He also said that it is important to have a supportive team and community. Dylan's team members help him with his business in many different ways, based on their strengths and interests – they paint, make jewellery, assist with pricing, participate in rock hounding, do research, and continuously support him to connect with people, places, and new opportunities. With so much drive and passion, I am sure that Dylan and his business will continue to thrive.