



Magine that!

Snowboard manufacturer thrives on great art, locally-sourced wood and the power of flax seeds

By: Stephanie Porter

Three friends, shown right, who had been snowboarding and working around the globe (Mike Maddock in Whistler, B.C., Stephen Wheeler in New Zealand, and Marcel Savidon in Corner Brook, N.L.) found themselves in Stephenville, N.L. at the same time. Wheeler mentioned he'd found online instructions for building a DIY ski press, and that he wanted to make his own snowboard. The others were eager to help out.

Building materials were found—including steel ties from the defunct Newfoundland Railway and fire hose from a phoenix pumper—and they got started. That was 2009; it took practically the whole year (and a lot of determination, frustration, and passion), to build one snowboard they were proud of.

They liked it so much they decided to assess their chances of making a viable business out of handcrafted snowboards.

"Why not? There were no snowboard companies in Newfoundland," Maddock says, adding that the company, which officially launched in 2010, is the only snowboard manufacturer in Atlantic Canada.

Magine Snowboards sells primarily through retailers across Atlantic Canada, but fills order from across Canada and beyond. Their production levels are still relatively low—necessary due to the 40-plus step building process and strict quality standards—but growing steadily as processes become more efficient and demand increases. Magine made some 100 boards this year; 200 are planned for next.



One-of-a-kind ride

In order to succeed, Magine has to stand out. Manufacturing from a workshop on the Port au Port peninsula on Newfoundland's west coast is one way of doing so. Handcrafting premium snowboards using locally sourced poplar, spruce, and birch is another (most manufacturers outsource production overseas). Then there's the artwork on the boards, often done by local artists and always in tune with the mandate of the company.

But it's paying special attention to making the manufacturing process as environmentally friendly as possible that may truly set Magine apart as innovators.

Magine adopted a soy-based epoxy to replace the toxic oil-based resins they started with. "Soy-based is more expensive, but we don't need to wear respirators to use it," says Maddock. "And it works."

The benefits of flax

More difficult was finding an ecological alternative to the fiberglass that is generally layered above and below the snowboard's wooden core. In consultation with Winnipeg's Composites Innovation Centre, a number of options were researched and tried. Boards were built, tested, and broken. Eventually, "Bio-Tex," a high-performance material made of flax fibre, was selected. "We're the only snowboard company in the

world using this material in our boards," says Maddock.

The flax board, named "Bio Comp," has had great reviews. "It's a unique board with specific characteristics," Maddock describes. "It's very forgiving, strong but soft, playful." It's not a race board (which tend to be stiff and fragile), but will suit many riders. And it's a welcome addition to the Magine lineup, which now stands at over 20 snowboard models, differentiated by size and use.

In spring 2013, Magine received over \$10,000 in support from the Research and Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador (RDC) for rigorous testing of new snowboard designs and manufacturing processes. Magine is working with RDC and the College of the North Atlantic to gather quantitative data on flex and other characteristics of the snowboards.

"We want to be the east coast brand," Maddock says. "Lots of people out here are passionate about riding; we want to help the snow sport industry grow in Atlantic Canada.

"Snowboarding is a lifestyle, a culture. The story behind the snowboard is important. People want something made locally that says what they want it to say."

But only, he adds, if the boards are technically good enough. On this count, Maddock is confident Magine is at the top of its game, and will only keep improving and innovating. | [ABM](#)