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Loyalist College graduate, former homeless and president/CEO of Skid Row, a multimedia company based in Coquitlam, BC, Joe Roberts is leading 'The Push for Change: Uniting for Homeless Youth', where he will push a shopping cart across Canada in 2013 to build awareness and support for Canadian homeless youth. Above, Roberts receives the Premier's Award, which is presented to graduates Ontario Colleges from applied arts and technology program in business, from Maureen Piercy, president of Loyalist.

From street kid to corner office

By Jerome Lessard, The Intelligencer

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Loyalist College graduate and former homeless on skid row Joe Roberts shares an "unshakeable" belief that change and transformation are possible with the right resources, the right people and the right purpose.

The former homeless street kid and drug addict who turned successful businessman after graduating from both the general arts and business marketing programs at Loyalist in the 1990s is planning to push a shopping cart across Canada in 2013 to build awareness and support for homeless youth in Canada, during The Push for Change: Uniting for Homeless Youth.

He and business partner Sean Richardson, a sport psychologist, are building an engagement odyssey that will create a call to action to get people involved and challenge areas of their own lives, their families' through subjects that can lead to homelessness.

"For the trek I will cover close to 8,000 km walking up to a marathon per day for close to 200 days starting on March 1, 2013 in St John's Newfoundland," said Roberts during a lunch at Club 213 with Maureen Piercy, president of Loyalist and other Loyalist's officials.

"And as part of a build up for the cross-country tour we are planning a 1,000-km pilot trek from Calgary to Vancouver this summer, starting this coming July 1."

Roberts' journey will cover the most densely populated regions of Canada, with events, public experiences and appearances throughout the nation. The Push for Change: Uniting for Homeless Youth has an estimate start to finish time of seven months — "if all goes well," said Roberts — and is expected to make its way through Belleville with a special event at Loyalist College sometime in the fall.

Roberts said his trek will be covered via a blog, a Facebook page and YouTube videos.

"We thought that the shopping cart was a great way to capture attention as well as its symbolic representation of homelessness in North America, said Roberts, who is now an expert in overcoming impossible situations and successfully moving forward.

Roberts made his first million in sales before he was 35 years old. He became the CEO of Skid Row, one of Vancouver's leading multimedia firms. He also published The Seven Secrets to Profit from Adversity and was recognized by Maclean's Magazine as one of 10 Canadians who have made a difference.

For more information on The Push for Change: Uniting for Homeless Youth or to contribute to Robert's efforts visit www.thepushforchange.com .

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