

Joe Roberts walking across Canada with a stop to speak in Truro

trurodaily.com/News/Local/2016-07-08/article-4581704/Joe-Roberts-walking-across-Canada-with-a-stop-to-speak-in-Truro/1

Published on July 08, 2016

In a few weeks, Joe Roberts and his shopping cart will make their way into Truro.

Roberts, 49, has logged well over 1,000 km and he's expected to arrive in Truro on July 12, or Day 72.

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Joe Roberts, along with his shopping cart – a symbol of chronic youth homelessness – will make his way to Truro, more than 70 days after beginning The Push For Change walk. It will take him 17 months to cover 9,000 kilometres.

The Push for Change will take him more than 9,000 km total, over 10 provinces and three territories, in 17 months.

The purpose? To raise awareness of youth homelessness and raise money to combat it.

"I left home when I was 15," said Roberts. "From 15 to 19 years old, I was sporadically homeless, and from 19 until about 21, I was chronically homeless on the streets of Vancouver."

Roberts admits it was alcohol and drug addiction that drove him to the streets. Fortunately, the system in Canada helped him with treatment and schooling.

It was May 1 when Roberts and his team hit the streets, him pushing a shopping cart, symbolic of chronic youth homelessness.

"Oftentimes in an inner city, you will see homeless people with a shopping cart, either for cans and bottles, or garbage, or sometimes it has all their worldly belongings in it."

No matter the course to youth homelessness, Roberts said one thing is common: most were sitting in classroom chairs when they were on the brink of homelessness; and for many, their teachers knew, as was his case.

"They didn't have a system to help, they didn't have a tool to use. That's why we're championing and investing at the school level, so youth are getting resources at that point."

So far, the campaign has raised about \$60,000. An event will be held at Harris Home Hardware Building Centre, Willow Street on July 12 from 2 to 4 p.m. Donations can be made at the store, or the Pictou Road location in Bible Hill.

Bethany Hagen is organizing the local event, after the Willow Street location manager heard Roberts speak a few years ago and approached her.

"Youth homelessness as we know it today is a large number," Hagen said. "Being a youth myself, I feel it's important to help prevent, reduce, and in the end, have the possibility of ending youth homelessness. In order to do so, we have to educate youth about youth homelessness.

"Reading about youth homelessness in a textbook in school isn't as powerful as hearing Joe's inspiring story in



person,” she said.”

For more information on The Push For Change, or to stay up-to-date on Roberts’ progress, visit <http://www.thepushforchange.com/>.

rtetanish@trurodaily.com

Twitter: @TDNRaissa

UPCOMING:

- A fundraising event is being held at the TAAC Grounds in Truro on July 9, 1-4 p.m. There will be a Push For Change relay, as well as children’s activities, with all money going to The Push For Change. For more information, or to participate in the relay, email thepushforchangetruro@gmail.com.