

# Push for Change at Six Nations

[tworowtimes.com/news/local/push-change-six-nations/](http://tworowtimes.com/news/local/push-change-six-nations/)

12/21/2016



Group one from this year's "Push for Change" campaign shortly after completing their share of the "Sleeping Bag Challenge" to help raise awareness for youth homelessness. Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill and the rest of the group sat outside on the ground in a sleeping bag from noon to 1 p.m. on Wednesday December 14. Other community members took turns doing the same until 5 p.m. Photo by Jayson Koblun

OHSWEKEN – The Push for Change journey made a pit stop at the Six Nations Community Hall last Wednesday to help bring awareness to what being a homeless youth is like and how the community can help.

Throughout the course of the day youth and adults raised funds by experiencing what a homeless person might experience in a "sleep out" for one hour in the cold while earning pledges. the group raised an impressive \$9,500 by the end of the day.

Chief Ava Hill brought forth thanks to all of the businesses and community members that helped the event and said she was thankful Push for Change came to the community.

"There is homelessness in our community too and one of the ways we need to deal with it is putting it out there and saying we need to do something about it," said Hill. "That's why I was so appreciative of Joe coming here and bringing awareness to homelessness, not only across the country but in all of the small communities as well."

Hill easily drew the connection to how a community plays a huge role in helping youth that are homeless.

"Being homeless can make it hard for individuals to focus on their schooling and their work when they're worrying about where they're going to sleep and where they're going to eat," she said. "We have the shelter at Ganohkwasra,

we have the Youth Lodge, Health and Social Services and we encourage you to reach out and use those services if you find yourself in a difficult situation.”

Joe Roberts, the man behind the campaign, began his walk on May 1 of 2016 and his drive comes from the fact that he was once a homeless youth himself.

“A 517 day walk across the second widest country in the world, over 9,000 kilometres with 10 provinces, visiting three Northern territories with over 400 community events,” said Roberts. “That was the dream we are now living today.”

The goal of the journey is to get from the East of Canada to the West to raise awareness and money to help combat youth homelessness.

“Along the way our goal was to always have a high level of community engagement like we’re having today,” he said. “When you experience — in an empathic way — what it might be like outside, then you begin to understand the issue. Some of us experience it, some of us don’t.”

Roberts recalled a friend of his who was a high-ranking official within the Ontario Provincial Police who did a “sleep out,” but still didn’t feel like he actually felt what a homeless person might feel.

“And I said ‘of course, sir, you could go outside for a month and you still wouldn’t have the experience of what it’s like to be homeless because I don’t get to take away your hope,” said Roberts.

“I can take away your warmth, I can take away your money, I can take away your cellphone, but unless I can remove your home, the best we can do is that empathic experience which is so valuable to understand,” he said. “I was once in that position where I didn’t have hope.”

After explaining his own emotional trek out of homelessness, he was awarded a certificate by Chief Ava Hill that wished him a safe journey. He was thanked for his message and ability to come to the Six Nations community to help in the fight against youth homelessness.

## **Chezney Martin**

