

Campaign to End Youth Homelessness Comes to Manitoba

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Chief Craig Alexander and his family greet Joe Roberts at Roseau River First Nation

Preventing, reducing and ending homelessness is the goal behind one man's trek across Canada. Joe Roberts began his journey May 1st, 2016 in Newfoundland and is walking across the country pushing a shopping cart, a symbol of



Roberts is presented with a gift during his visit to Roseau chronic homelessness, raising awareness of the issue. He stopped at Roseau River First Nation on Saturday, day 336 of the Push for Change campaign, thanks to an invite by the Dakota Ojibway Police Service.

"We got an opportunity to walk with the Chief, engage the community and to share to the kilometres. I don't think there is a person in the country who doesn't want to see every single young person indoors and safely transitioning into adulthood."

Roberts adds the journey has been intense at times, noting he walks twenty-four kilometres every day, and is inspired by his own experiences of being a drug-addicted teen living on the streets of Vancouver.

"Thanks to my mom and a police officer I got a second chance, went back to school and in less than twelve years I went from being that kid pushing a shopping cart around the inner-city to being on the cover of Canadian Business as a celebrated entrepreneur."

He explains that the possibility to overcome these obstacles was always inside of him, however Roberts says he didn't have the tools and the ability to access it on his own. A portion of the money raised from the cross-country trek will help launch homeless prevention models in Canadian schools, however Roberts notes partnerships need to form with the province and federal government in order to support these programs.

"Even if we did reach our goal of fifty cents from every Canadian, seventeen million dollars is a drop in the bucket compared to what we need to do to invest in long-term, sustainable preventions models - it's in the billions."

Roberts goes on to say however, that this money would be well spent.

"What that would prevent is tens of thousands of young people entering into homelessness and causing additional taxpayer dollars through things like institutionalization, hospitalization and other services that take up a lot of resources."

Roberts will celebrate one year on the road in Brandon. He's also made stops in Steinbach, Selkirk and Norway House.