

Push For Change making visit to Yellowknife

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Cameron
Wilkinson



He says he's inspired by the Man in Motion and Terry Fox.

That really goes without saying when you consider that Joe Roberts set out to journey across Canada as an effort to fight youth homelessness.

"It's almost our calling card, our signature. As Canadians, we see a problem and we raise awareness by crossing the country."

Joe Roberts set out in May of 2016. It didn't just *happen*, as it might sound. Him and his wife, Marie, were busy for months prior. They were setting up sponsors and trying their best to plan accordingly.

"When you're pushing a shopping cart across the country, there's a lot of planning involved. What's funny is that I'm not sure what I will do once I'm done."

He's been busy, but the time off may be even more appreciated when you consider his situation.

"My wife and I got married right before we began this whole thing. It's funny, we dated in high school, I call her my high school sweetheart. We haven't really had a real honeymoon, so I think we'll look into that. Take some time off."

Joe finally touches down in Vancouver in September and he says he's still scheduled for the following months. Making visits and things of that nature.

The whole idea of youth homelessness is close to Joe. He spent some of his life on the streets, addicted to drugs. He says that the main reason for that time in his life was that he didn't know what to do to get help.

"I had unresolved issues. Once I found a way to temper those, it was like a weight off of my shoulders. I turned my life around because I knew how to face my demons."

Youth homelessness. There's layers to solving the riddle. The issue starts young, which is why it's hard to combat.

“Whether it’s family issues; drug issues; LGBTQ issues – people have a reason for being on the streets that just isn’t fair. They need help. It starts at home. The people need a voice.”

Joe has visited Yellowknife before. He feels a connection with the city. He mentioned that he sees a lot of issues facing Yellowknife, particularly in the downtown area, that stem from how a Northern city tends to be treated socially.

“There’s an issue with how the Indigenous people are treated. That’s not news. Some are having issues that are entirely out of their control. I feel that connection, having been where I was in my life. I want to help; to raise awareness.”

Before Joe had to go, I asked him, ‘when you’re on the road, what is your diet like?’

“It’s not good at times,” he laughs. “I do well in the mornings. A bowl of oatmeal, some fruit. But then the stomach rumblings hit in the afternoon. You’re walking all morning. You can’t help but think of pizza in that moment.”

To be fair, Joe, I can’t help but think of pizza in all moments.

Joe Roberts and Push For Change will be in Yellowknife on July 2nd.

To learn more about the Push For Change cause, or to donate, click [here](#).

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