

Shopping for change Former homeless man treks nation to help eradicate problem

 peicanada.com/eastern_graphic/article_0ae5ac66-58bc-11e6-bfe5-8fdf609493e4.html

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“There I was, three days before Christmas, bootless, humiliated, homeless and sitting in the pouring rain thinking this is the end, I’m going to die in the gutter.”

Joe Roberts knows the challenges homeless people face on a daily basis.

He lived it himself on the unforgiving streets of Vancouver.

It was 30 years ago when he hit rock bottom.

The now 49-year old retired CEO of a technology company is pushing a symbolic shopping cart across the nation to raise awareness.

“I got a second chance,” he said, explaining he went through recovery, enrolled in college and in less than 12 years he went from pushing a shopping cart to being on the cover of Maclean’s magazine.

Through his own story he knows there is always hope and things can change.

“In PEI it’s largely hidden,” he said. “Just because we don’t see kids sitting in front of a liquor store with a piece of cardboard doesn’t mean there are no youth struggling.”

It is through the Push for Change campaign Mr Roberts said those youth can be helped.

The goal is to raise \$17 million and put a school based support program in every high school in the country where youth can get the help they need before they end up broken and on the street.

Still, Mr Roberts’ efforts are more than that.

His time in PEI last week took him to the Salvation Army where he encountered some people who were so down and out they wanted to give up hope.

“Have hope,” he told them. “Inside each and every one of us is infinitely more than we can see.”

Mr Roberts is now pushing his way through New Brunswick and plans to reach Vancouver on September 30, 2017.

To follow his route and learn more about the project to rid the country of homelessness go to www.pushforchange.com