

PRESS RELEASE

Double amputee Spencer West embarks on coast to coast road trip to celebrate Canadian students opening the doors to education around the world

--We Create Change Tour will connect with tens of thousands of young Canadian change-makers across nine provinces. Follow Spencer West on his cross-Canada journey at

www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour--

--The tale of this inspirational road-trip can be seen in the We Create Change Tour promo [here](#) --
-- Epic coast-to-coast tour is made possible by RBC and Ford of Canada --



Toronto, Ontario (April 2, 2014) – Ten weeks. Nine provinces. Ninety stops. One epic Canadian road trip. Me to We motivational speaker, author and Free The Children Ambassador, **Spencer West**, along with friends from chart-topping, MMVA nominated Canadian group, **Neverest**, 11-year-old activist **Hannah Alper**, cast members from the Emmy-nominated TV series **DEGRASSI** and other surprise guests will embark on a **first of its kind cross-Canada road trip**; connecting directly with **tens of thousands** of young Canadians to celebrate the incredible actions they have taken to provide their peers overseas in developing communities with access to education.

An initiative of international charity and educational partner, Free The Children, and supported by RBC and Ford Motor Company of Canada, Ltd., the **We Create Change Tour** will run from April 11 – June 17, 2014 gathering students and supporters in schools and auditoriums across the country for a dynamic and interactive educational event that will explore the issue of equal access to education. Akin to a ‘mini [We Day](#)’, the event will be headlined by West and will feature incredible stories of young Canadian change-makers, with show-stopping musical performances, firsthand accounts from students and educators from developing countries and countless special surprises.

Told that he would never be a functioning member of society, after losing both his legs at the age of five, West strives to redefine what is possible and inspires millions of people with powerful stories of overcoming challenges. Last year West helped inspire Canadians to raise over \$1.4 million through Free The Children’s [We Create Change](#) campaign with an 11 day, 300 km walk from Edmonton to Calgary – which he did on his hands and in his wheelchair – providing clean water for life to more than 56,000

people. In 2012, West reached the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, garnering international media attention and raising more than half a million dollars in support of clean water.

The We Create Change Tour is West's third initiative with Free The Children. He has travelled the world to hear girls talk about their hopes for the future. He has met parents who built bamboo school rooms by hand on the coast of Ghana. He has talked to boys on the sprawling plains of Kenya's Maasai Mara and the foothills of India's Aravalli mountains about the power of education. Everywhere West travels, stories of empowerment begin with the same dream – the dream of going to school.

"Fifty-seven million children are still denied access to education. I've had the chance to speak with young people around the world, who dream of changing their lives and the lives of their families through education. I've seen firsthand, the difference that going to school can make for a girl in Kenya, or a young boy in Ghana," said Spencer West. "Every child has the right to education and the students we are visiting on the We Create Change Tour share in this belief and have worked hard to make this a reality for so many of their peers overseas. I feel honored that I have the opportunity to celebrate their fundraising efforts to build schools, and I'm excited to share their stories with the rest of Canada, encouraging others to follow their lead."

Throughout the school year students across Canada have supported [Free The Children's Year of Education initiative](#) – a commitment to build 200 schools and school rooms for children overseas, to provide them with an education that will help break the cycle of poverty. From bake sales and school dances, to pajama days and participating in a Canada-wide coin drive called, [We Create Change](#), young Canadians have been hard at work shining a light on the issue of equal access to education and fundraising to build schools and school rooms overseas. Since the kick-off of the joint Free The Children and RBC We Create Change coin drive in September 2013, students have been reaching out to family, friends and the community for support in collecting coins in special cardboard school houses. Students then roll up the coins and deposit them at their local RBC location, all to support school building projects overseas, to provide more youth with the opportunity to go to school. Students across Canada can also enter the RBC *It All Adds Up* Challenge, a financial literacy contest linked to the **We Create Change Tour**, before April 9 for a chance to win a visit to a school in their region by Spencer West, DEGRASSI cast members and other Free The Children ambassadors.

"Students across Canada are rallying in support of the crucial role that education plays in creating opportunity for young people around the globe – we're proud to help celebrate their extraordinary work," said Dave McKay, president, RBC. "Their fundraising and community efforts continue to demonstrate how passionate Canadian youth are about having a positive impact on the world around them. We're also thrilled by the number of students who are using financial education lessons from *It All Adds Up* in their fundraising and look forward to announcing the winning schools as the tour moves across the country."

West will be personally driving coast-to-coast in a custom 2014 Ford Escape donated by Ford. The Ford Escape has been outfitted with hand controls for brakes and gas pedals, extra padding in the driver seat and hand grips for ease of accessibility into the vehicle for Spencer and his wheelchair. Remote control engine start and remote control lift-gate, already standard in the Ford Escape, offer added convenience and accessibility for West. The vehicle will also have functioning gas and brake pedals for use by other drivers offering maximum flexibility.

“We are awed by the passion of young Canadians and are proud to celebrate the accomplishments of our youth with Ford of Canada’s support of Spencer West’s We Create Change Tour,” said Dianne Craig, president and CEO, Ford of Canada. “Free the Children and Ford of Canada share a common belief that a better world starts right here at the grassroots in our communities and that anything is possible through the spirit of collaboration. We are honoured to support this wonderful organization and look forward to continuing to make an impact hand-in-hand with Free the Children and our Ford dealers in communities across the country.”

The We Create Change Tour will stop at the following locations:

St. John’s, Newfoundland & Labrador	April 11	Barrie, Ontario	May 14
Halifax, Nova Scotia	April 14-15	Parry Sound, Ontario	May 15
Fredericton, New Brunswick	April 16	North Bay, Ontario	May 16
Quebec City, Quebec	April 17-22	Thunder Bay, Ontario	May 20
Montreal, Quebec	April 23-25	Winnipeg, Manitoba	May 21-23
Ottawa, Ontario	April 28-29	Brandon, Manitoba	May 26
Renfrew, Ontario	April 30	Regina, Saskatchewan	May 27
Perth, Ontario	May 1	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	May 28
Whitby, Ontario	May 2	Edmonton, Alberta	May 29-June 2
Richmond Hill, Ontario	May 5	Calgary, Alberta	June 3-4
Mississauga, Ontario	May 5	Vernon, British Columbia	June 5
Toronto, Ontario	May 6	Kelowna, British Columbia	June 6
Oakville, Ontario	May 7	Chilliwack, British Columbia	June 9
Hamilton, Ontario	May 8	Langley, British Columbia	June 9
London, Ontario	May 9	Maple Ridge, British Columbia	June 10
Waterloo, Ontario	May 12	Port Coquitlam, British Columbia	June 11
		Vancouver, British Columbia	June 12 - 13
		Toronto, Ontario	June 16-17

Over the years, West has inspired millions with his passion for making a difference. Now, he is turning the tables and shining the spotlight on the students and schools across Canada who inspire him with their amazing dedication to making education a reality for young people around the world. Thanks in part to the support of Ford of Canada stories from the road will be updated regularly at www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour.

Learn more about how students, schools and individual Canadians can support Free The Children's Year of Education initiative, or to stay connected with the We Create Change Tour:

#ChangeTour

Follow Free The Children on [Facebook](#)

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Follow Spencer on Twitter [@spencer2thewest](#)

www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour

Footage and high resolution photos of participating students, Spencer West, Hannah Alper, Neverest and other supporters, the tour bus and the 2014 Ford Escape specially modified for Spencer, etc. can be downloaded in the Electronic Press Kit: www.freethechildren.com/wecreatechangetour/press.

About Free The Children

Free The Children is an international charity and educational partner. Founded in 1995 by international activist Craig Kielburger, Free The Children believes in a world where young people are free to achieve their fullest potential, and empowers youth to remove barriers that prevent them from being active local and global citizens. The organization's domestic programs – which include We Day, Free The Children's signature youth empowerment event – educate, engage and empower 2.3 million youth across North America and UK become engaged global citizens. Its international projects are implemented through a holistic and sustainable development model called Adopt a Village. Currently, Adopt a Village supports community development in eight countries; Kenya, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua, rural China and India. Through its international programming, Free The Children has brought more than 650 schools and school rooms to youth and provided clean water, health care and sanitation to 1 million people around the world, freeing children and their families from the cycle of poverty.

The organization has received the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Award from the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, and has formed successful partnerships with leading school boards and Oprah's Angel Network. For more information, visit www.freethechildren.com.

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