

PROFILE

It's What's Left That Counts!



Chris Koch Kayaking on Mara Lake, BC.

The story of Chris Koch

Chris Koch was born and raised in the small farming and ranching community of Nanton, Alberta, and to him, it was the best place in the world to grow up. Shortly after his birth, his grandmother received the news that he had been born without both arms and legs. Unfazed, she jokingly responded, "Bruce [Chris's dad] never did finish anything he started!" Her reaction set the tone for his parents' approach to raising him and shaped his own philosophy that a healthy dose of humour can help ease the challenges of life.

Despite being born without arms and legs, Chris's childhood was very normal. Like any other small-town kid, he played road hockey and baseball with his friends, and like any mischievous youngster, he occasionally found himself in trouble at school and faced his parents' reprimands when his grades fell short.

Most of his earliest and fondest memories were around the farm. He eagerly helped out on his grandpa's farm, doing whatever chores he could. One lesson he learned early on was that if he wanted to ski, golf, or drive a tractor or a combine, it was never about how difficult it would be but about figuring out a way to do it and making it happen.

With that mindset, combined with the resources and backing from his family and the support he received from The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP)

Program, the possibilities were endless. The War Amps provided him with financial assistance for artificial limbs and adaptive devices. He attended their seminars, which encouraged him to develop a positive attitude towards his amputations and to believe that he could achieve whatever he set his mind to. He could snowboard, golf, surf, and work on the farm.

"Joining The War Amps at a very young age was a game-changer for me," says Chris. "It gave me the courage to try any activity I wanted, without limitations. The War Amps taught me that it's not about what you're missing, but about what you can do with what you have. Their motto, 'It's what's left that counts,' has been my guiding principle ever since."

Later in life, along with his buddy, he travelled across Canada and Europe, seeing incredible places and meeting amazing people. He shared his story and experiences, hoping to encourage others to live their lives to their greatest potential and to have fun, just as he does. His dream of hosting a motivational speaking tour across Canada, titled "If I Can...", came to fruition shortly after these travels. He now travels from coast to coast, delivering his message at schools, conferences, and various events and venues.

A few years ago, he decided to travel with his backpack from Calgary all the way to St. John's, Newfoundland, using his longboard to get around. He saw

amazing places and met many people along the way. He says it is one of the coolest things he has ever done. When someone asked what he did for a living, he loved being able to tell them that he drove large combines and tractors. It wasn't a job one would expect a guy without arms and legs to be doing!

"I'm just a regular dude," he would tell them. He can do everything everyone else is doing. He loves farming, traveling, and having fun with what life has to offer. His life has been an adventure, filled with laughter and resilience. He has never let limitations or obstacles deter him from pursuing his dreams. Along his travels, he encouraged others to adopt the same mindset. He believes that worrying about how one looks cheats oneself out of opportunities.

Chris also continues to attend The War Amps CHAMP seminars, empowering young amputees to look beyond their challenges and dream of the possibilities.

"Chris's story was never about the difficulty of a task but about finding a way to accomplish it," says Danita Chisholm, Executive Director of The War Amps. His outlook reflects the joy and fulfillment he has found in life—he doesn't dwell on what he lacks; he celebrates what he has."

"The War Amps is committed to helping young amputees live their best lives," Chisholm continues. "Chris is a fantastic example of this. His positive outlook and determination are an

inspiration to everyone. His story shows incredible strength and resilience."

The War Amps receives no government grants and would welcome a charitable estate donation in your will. With your help, and through public support of the Key Tag Service, The War Amps is able to provide Canada's amputees with essential artificial limbs, peer connections, advocacy support and so much more.

Since its founding in 1918, The War Amps programs have grown from assisting war amputees – whom they still serve – to all amputees, including children. Today, there is still much to do to ensure amputees have the artificial limbs they need to lead independent and active lives. The public's support of the Key Tag Service, which has returned more than 1.5 million sets of lost keys to their owners, funds essential programs for all amputees across Canada, including CHAMP for child amputees. The War Amps does not receive government grants.



Chris at a War Amps seminar with Champ Cooper Tidmarsh.



Chris driving a combine at a family friend's ranch in Torquay, Sask.