

# REDEFINING MOTION: THE CHRIS LESANKO STORY

## PRELIMINARY STORY/SCRIPT OUTLINE

The approach of this documentary is to follow the intimate life story of Chris Lesanko in an observational way with the POV being through his eyes as a person with a high physical disability, enhanced with annotations from family members and friends about how his disability affects these people closest to him.

Tone: The Chris Lesanko Story will be a heartfelt look into what it's really like to live as a tetraplegic daily, the goals strived for, and what can be accomplished with limited mobility by pushing beyond the traditional rehabilitation practices and using sheer determination. Chris will guide us through his early years, his rise to multiple award-winning national lacrosse player, the tragic one second event that changed his life at age 21, and an in-depth exploration of the ensuing struggles and progress he is making towards rehabilitation. Chris's close caring family and other supportive people in his life will give open and honest testimonials and commentary throughout the documentary to provide viewers with intimate insights in how Chris's condition affects them emotionally, and in other ways. More positive and joyful notes will enthuse and give hope as Chris works towards and achieves his adapted goals, finds innovative methods to assist in his progress, and turns his attention to helping others with physical disabilities. Paralympic wheelchair raced champion Jessica Frotten will add her insights into how Chris's friendship and his vision helped her, and Sandi Marshall, manager of First Steps, will share the benefits of Chris's work in helping others, including children with neurological conditions.

This inspiring story will hopefully bring a better understanding to the world about how to be more inclusive in society and encourage others with disabilities to explore their strength, search for innovative ways to achieve their dreams and have a higher quality of life.

Format: The Chris Lesanko Story will be a two-camera shoot augmented with drone shots and as close to observational as possible. Interviews and inter-actions with Chris will be enriched with action scenes, and dialogues with his mom, dad, brother, best friend, and former coach/current colleague, as well as his personal rehabilitation trainer. Photographs, newspaper clippings, and video of Chris playing lacrosse, news events, and family footage will be woven throughout.

*Chris Lesanko #12*



In this thought-provoking documentary, we will get an insightful glimpse into Chris Lesanko's progression from national lacrosse all-star player at age 21 to devastating immobility as a tetraplegic. We'll see his experiences and challenges, as well as some of successes, and achievements as he continues to struggle towards rehabilitation, and how he's dedicated his life to improving the lives of others who have spinal cord injuries.

We'll see how while still living in his wheelchair with limited physical capacities, he achieves his educational goals, and maintains a working life in the world of lacrosse.

As the documentary begins, crowds cheer and we see footage of Chris playing lacrosse... flashes of articles/headlines and photos of him and team holding awards, ribbons, articles, and visuals of actual awards.



Through Chris, and his brother, Nick Lesanko, the audience will learn of how Chris's determination to make it to the top developed from his childhood growing up on a farm in rural Saskatchewan playing and excelling at various sports. We'll see how his competitiveness, his drive and determination to triumph was spurred on by trying to keep up to two older brothers, and how this tenacity became his fundamental principle to live by and helps him cope with his disability today. This thread will be woven throughout the documentary.

*Nick Lesanko, brother*

Owen and Chris will talk about how they started playing lacrosse at age 6 and Chris ended up with scholarships at universities, about sports being

his whole life, and his goals for his future.

Faye Lesanko, Chris's mom will tell of how she suggested, ironically, that he go into lacrosse when he was older because in hockey, he was so small and would likely get creamed. Brad Cameron, his coach from school days and a colleague now, and best friend since childhood Owen Carlson will talk about what a rising star he was and about his fortitude and tenacity in all he does.

*Coach Cameron & Chris*



In old footage, photos, and news, we'll see Chris, walking, running, and playing lacrosse, winning awards provincially and then progressing nationally, going to Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec where he had a world of limitless possibilities opening for him academically and as a lacrosse super-star.

Chris will tell us how he wasn't at the awards ceremony in Sherbrooke that night. He'll tell of how life changed forever in a split second when he joined a frat house scrum and fell backwards against a waterbed frame. And how after many hours in surgery, he awoke to learn that he had suffered an incomplete spinal cord injury, of the 4th and 5th vertebrae. "I was paralyzed from the neck down."

We'll learn his incredibly successful, albeit very young lacrosse career just kept gaining momentum and how the future looked fantastic after a record setting year in 2005 when the athletes' award ceremony at Bishops University was held, and Chris had won. Big. The 21-year-old was deemed Men's Lacrosse Team Most Valuable Player. An incredible accomplishment, and Chris had also brought home the coveted Bishop's University Male Athlete of the Year Award – the first lacrosse player ever to have the honour bestowed upon him.



Through Chris's eyes, we'll hear his anguish as he learned



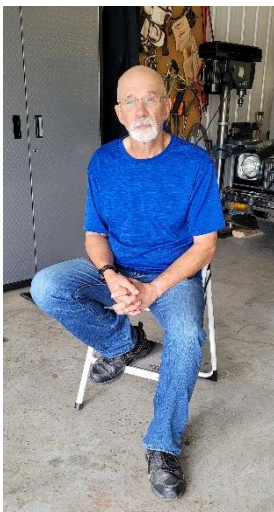
that he would never walk again. He was now a tetraplegic and doctors told him he would likely not have any more movement that he had at that moment. This born athlete was now faced with his most daunting set of challenges yet. Would he accept the limitations of this new, nearly motionless life? And if not, what struggles would he be forced to endure?

He and his mom, Faye Lesanko, talks about her devastation of

the news and the effects on the family. His dad will talk about the friends and neighbours rallying and holding fundraisers to help pay for the costs of transporting him back home, and ongoing lifelong expenses. Faye will tell us about his emotional highs and lows as he faced deterrents and despair and the physical and emotional struggles over the months and years.



*Faye Lesanko*



His brother Nick will tell us about how he and other family members helped Chris in his daily life right from the start; the personal care, help with body functions and other aspects involved, the financial difficulties, and the despair and disbelief they all faced. His mom will tell us how she had to make a choice of staying at home on the farm with her husband or helping Chris in Regina, and how Chris needed more help. His dad, Jack Lesanko, talks about how hard it is for the family to be separated, for him to be on the farm without his wife and family.

*Jack Lesanko*



We'll follow Chris's emotional ups and downs as he faces deterrents and despair and overcomes obstacles during the early stages of struggle to even move a shoulder or turn his neck. Chris will talk about the months spent in the hospital and the limitations of the health care system and how little there was and still is for resources for those with high physical disabilities.



Chris will talk about how he was not satisfied with the status quo of just sitting and living out the rest of his life in a wheelchair unable to fend for himself. How he couldn't feed himself, do his own personal care, or do any activities, and to steadily have his internal and external health deteriorate. He'll talk about how he pushed against the grain and sought something far more. Then we'll realize along with Chris that the traditional rehabilitation treatment and practices are doing little to improve function, independence, or quality of his life.

Chris will talk about his determination to face this adversity and to begin to fight for his physical mobility and his life back, that he wasn't going to give up. We will see what Chris encountered and how his will of achieving past successes inspired him. We'll hear of the challenges of everyday life, finding suitable caregivers to help with his daily needs, having to earn a living, and being dependent on others for everything, and how he wants to change this. His friend Owen, coach Brad, and brother Nick will talk about how Chris uses the drive tenacity, determination, and perseverance he learned as a young athlete, towards his progress on so many levels.

Chris will tell us how thrilled he was to learn of an innovative new intense and extensive exercise-based recovery method developed in California that gave him hope. And how, although expensive, his family and friends rally around him to start a classic golf tournament fundraiser and they manage to get him to California to Project Walk three times over the course of the next six-year span. The audience will share his elation at his progress there during each month, and how this gym has changed his life.

Chris will tell us though of his discouragement as he realizes that while he is improving, he needs more continuance and consistent therapy to advance in any significant way. And that cost is prohibitive for continued travel and treatment to the US, so he needs to find another avenue.



Owen Carlson, his best friend will tell of how he and Chris talked starting a gym from the time they were school buddies, and how the talk turned to bringing the innovative non-traditional rehabilitation gym to Saskatchewan. Owen and others will speak to how Chris wanted to help people with similar spinal cord injuries but not make money off them. Through Chris and Owen, we will hear how Chris's perseverance and foresight lead them to start a foundation and establish the First Steps Wellness Centre in Regina in 2010 and how this non-profit foundation which not only benefits and increases Chris's chances for recovery but is assisting others to make progress in their own rehabilitation.

*Chris and Owen at their old high school. Sturgis, SK*



We'll hear from Paralympian wheelchair racer, Jessica Frotten who moved from Whitehorse to Regina to train at his specialized gym and how she continues to benefit from it. And Jack, Chris's dad, will talk about Chris opening a gym in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and another in Sherbrook and how proud he is of his son helping others with four gyms across the country.



*Jessica Frotten*



Sandi Marshall, one of the managers of First Steps, will explain how Chris expanded the gym to provide help for those with neurological disabilities, particularly children. Chris will tell us how much he relies on going to the gym and how he was able to repurpose his life, and that even though he still has minimal movement, his overall mobility and better health conditions have allowed him to accomplish other goals.



*Sandi Marshall*

We will be amazed to learn that besides helping those with a spinal cord injuries and other neurological disabilities through his Wellness Centres, Chris has completed his Environmental Studies Degree and continues to be involved in lacrosse now more than ever. When he isn't at the centre working out, we'll find him busy working for the Saskatchewan Lacrosse Association, being a casual lacrosse program coordinator for Standing Buffalo Lacrosse, acting as Commissioner of the Prairie Gold Lacrosse League, as well as sitting on the Regina Field Lacrosse Board.

Another amazing feat for Chris we'll learn about is when for the first-time in 2020 he was able to 'tee off' from his wheelchair and do the opening drive at his own Chris Lesanko Golf Classic. Started fifteen years earlier to get Chris to treatment in California, this tournament attracts golfers from across the US and Canada and continues to help fund Chris's rehabilitation.

<https://www.chrislesankogolfclassic.com/>

As the documentary comes towards a close, Chris will take us back to his hometown and his school. He and Owen will reminisce and talk about where Chris started, and how he's progressed in many aspects of his life despite the tragedy of his accident.

We will learn what Chris can do now physically, such as feed himself, and although small feats of accomplishment for some people, means more independence for him. He'll talk about how he's achieved some of his goals and what he plans next.



*Nick and Chris*

He'll talk about how he continues to participate in lacrosse ventures and activities. He'll tell us where he is headed to, and what his plans are for the immediate and long-term future. Chris will stress that one of his major goals is to be able to take care of himself and to continue to help



others. Chris will also say how career-wise, his future has to involve lacrosse.

Chris's mom and other family members will comment on what they hope for Chris too in the future. His Mom will say it would be wonderful to have someone reliable to be there for Chris all the time, and then she could go home to her husband. Chris and the others will all say how much they hope for medical breakthroughs and pray one day Chris will walk again.

The documentary will end on a positive note with Chris envisioning and looking forward to his future.

