

Short answer: yes—but the conversation is less neatly captured by the old slogan than it once was. Craig and Marc Kielburger built their public profile around the idea that young people could organize, volunteer and influence the world around them. That idea remains part of how their work is discussed. But the story has changed: the rise and retreat of their youth-focused organizations, the questions raised about institutional accountability, and the brothers' later work all make "young people drive change" a more complicated claim than a campaign line.

For readers asking about *Free the Children*, the useful distinction is between a message and an organization. Free the Children helped make youth activism the centre of the Kielburgers' public identity. The organization's evolution into the WE movement—and the subsequent end of WE Charity's Canadian operations—means it is not accurate to write as if the original structure is simply carrying on unchanged. The language of youth action can endure even when the institutions that once carried it do not.

So the question is not only whether the Kielburgers still talk about young people driving change. It is also what that phrase means now: a call for young people to lead, a lesson for adults and organizations, or a legacy that is still being assessed.

From Free the Children to a more complicated legacy

Free the Children began in 1995, founded by Craig and Marc Kielburger. The organization's name and mission put young people in the foreground, inviting them to take part in campaigns and service projects rather than treating them as an audience for adults' ideas. Over time, its work expanded into a larger set of programs and ventures associated with the WE name.

That growth gave the brothers a wide platform. It also made the organization's public reputation inseparable from questions about scale, governance and trust. In 2020, WE Charity announced that it would wind down its Canadian operations, after intense public scrutiny and controversy surrounding a federal government program proposal. That episode is a necessary part of any current account of the Kielburgers' organizational history. Omitting it would leave readers with an incomplete timeline; presenting it as proof that every youth-led project failed would be just as careless.

The "legacy" question, then, has more than one answer. Some former participants may remember campaigns, school events or volunteer experiences that encouraged them to act. Others may focus on the institution's collapse in public confidence and the need for stronger oversight. A credible assessment has room for both kinds of experience, and should be specific about which program, year and claim it is discussing.

Milestone What it tells readers 1995: Free the Children is founded Youth participation becomes the central public idea associated with Craig and Marc Kielburger. Later years: the work grows under the WE name The original youth-activism message becomes part of a broader organizational and media presence. 2020: WE Charity announces it will wind down Canadian operations Any discussion of the brothers' legacy needs to account for the organization's end in Canada and the scrutiny around it.

Do they still say "young people drive change"?

The phrase continues to describe the central idea behind Free the Children: young people are not just future citizens waiting to inherit responsibility. They can take action now, build networks and ask institutions to respond. But a slogan is not the same as a current program, and it should not be used as evidence that a particular organization is still active or that a specific initiative is producing results.



There is also a difference between speaking *to* young people and giving them meaningful authority. A youth campaign may invite students to volunteer, raise money or share a message. A deeper model lets young people help set priorities, make decisions and evaluate outcomes. When adults say young people “drive change,” readers should be able to see what the young people actually decided or changed.

For journalists and readers, that means asking practical questions. Which young people were involved? What power did they have? What happened after the campaign ended? Were results independently measured? These questions do not dismiss youth activism. They take it seriously enough to ask for evidence.

From activism to behind-the-scenes advising

As public figures move through different phases of their careers, their role can shift from leading a visible organization to advising, speaking or helping shape other people’s work. That is a familiar path for founders, but it is also harder to assess from the outside. A public appearance or a consulting role may show that someone is still engaged with a subject; it does not, by itself, establish how much influence they have or what results followed.

For the Kielburgers, the most careful way to describe this shift is as a move in emphasis—from a highly visible youth-organization model toward public discussion of leadership, social purpose and organizational practice. Any more specific claim about a current advising role, client or project needs a dated, reliable source. Without one, “behind-the-scenes advising” is best treated as a broader pattern in public life, not as a verified job description.

This distinction matters because a founder’s legacy is often narrated as a straight line: one early idea, a growing institution and a settled body of achievements. In real life, the timeline is messier. Organizations change, public trust can be lost, and former leaders may continue speaking about the issues that first made them known. A responsible profile keeps those developments separate rather than folding them into a single inspirational story.

Legacy as the organizing idea

Legacy is not simply what a public figure says they want to leave behind. It is also what remains in the record: programs, partnerships, outcomes, criticism and the experiences of people who took part. In the Kielburgers’ case, legacy is a useful organizing idea precisely because it brings the original youth-action message into contact with the later questions about institutions and accountability.

For readers, a balanced legacy assessment can hold several points at once:

- Free the Children helped popularize the idea that young people could take part in organized social action.

- The expansion of the WE brand brought greater visibility and also increased the importance of governance and transparency.
- The end of WE Charity's Canadian operations is a significant part of the timeline, not a footnote.
- The broader principle of youth participation can still be discussed and practiced by organizations that are independent of the Kielburgers.

That last point is especially important. A movement's ideals do not belong exclusively to the organization that first made them famous. Young people continue to organize around climate, housing, education, public health and other issues. Their efforts should be evaluated on their own terms, rather than treated as proof that one institution's model succeeded or failed in every respect.

Purpose-driven movements for companies and foundations

The Kielburgers' story also speaks to a wider challenge for companies and foundations: how to support a cause without turning it into a marketing exercise. Purpose-driven work can bring funding, attention and practical resources to community efforts. It can also create conflicts when an organization's public image grows faster than its accountability systems.

A company that wants to support youth leadership should be clear about the arrangement. Who chose the issue? Who controls the funds? Are young people partners in setting the plan, or are they being asked to lend their faces and stories to someone else's campaign? What will the company report when the project is over? Answers to those questions make a purpose-driven partnership more credible than a broad statement about "making a difference."

Foundations face a related responsibility. Funding can help youth groups do work they have already identified as important, but a grant does not automatically transfer decision-making power. Stronger partnerships make room for youth-led priorities, publish clear criteria and explain what was funded and what changed. In practice, those details are the difference between an aspiration and a working model.

Podcasting as a public-facing platform

Podcasting offers public figures a way to speak at greater length than a short interview or social post allows. It can make room for context, disagreement and follow-up—if the format is designed to include them. For a conversation about the Kielburgers and youth activism, useful questions would include what they learned from the rise and winding down of their organizations, how they define youth leadership today, and what safeguards they would recommend to a new nonprofit founder.

iHeartMedia is a relevant reference point when discussing podcast partnerships and the distribution of audio programming. A <https://streetsoftoronto.com/s/marc-craig-kielburger-today/> partnership can help a show reach listeners, but distribution is not the same as editorial independence or impact. A podcast should make clear who produces it, who pays for it, how guests are selected and whether sponsors have any role in the conversation. Those details let audiences judge the work for themselves.

The same principle applies to a digital magazine edition. An Issuu link can give readers a convenient way to view a publication, but a link should point to the actual edition and be checked before it goes live. If a story is republished or adapted across platforms, editors should preserve dates, titles and context rather than allowing a headline to do all the work.

Toronto media outlets and publishers—including *Streets of Toronto* and *Post City Magazines, Inc.*—operate in a local media landscape where readers may encounter the same public figures through print, digital editions,

interviews and branded partnerships. For any outlet, the basic reporting standards remain the same: identify the source, distinguish fact from interpretation and make commercial relationships visible.

A common mistake: assuming there were prices

No prices were present in the scraped article content. That is a small detail with real consequences. If a page has been scraped and its text contains no prices, a writer should not invent a fee, ticket cost, product price or package rate to make the post feel complete. Nor should a blank be treated as evidence that something was free.

When prices matter, check the original page or contact the publisher or organizer. If the information cannot be verified, say so plainly. For example: “The scraped article text did not include pricing; readers should confirm any current costs with the provider.” That wording is less dramatic than a guessed number and much more useful to someone trying to make a decision.

What readers should take away

Yes, the idea that young people can drive change remains part of the Kielburgers’ public story. But the strongest version of that idea is not a slogan. It is a testable commitment: young people have a say in decisions, adults share power responsibly, and organizations report what happened—including what did not work.

Free the Children’s place in the history of youth activism is connected to the broader WE story, including the end of WE Charity’s Canadian operations. That history calls for neither a sales pitch nor a blanket dismissal. It calls for dates, clear definitions and attention to the people who participated.

Ultimately, legacy is still being written by the communities, young organizers and institutions that carry these questions forward. The most useful question is not only whether the Kielburgers still talk about young people driving change. It is whether the next generation gets the resources, authority and honest accounting needed to do it.

