

institution watch

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA



50 years

Canadian
Association for
Community Living

Diversity includes.

Fall 2011 / Volume 6, No. 2

Monitoring the
progress toward
a vision of full
community living
for *all* persons
with intellectual
disabilities.

This is a newsletter
written and produced
by the People First of
Canada-CACL Joint
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Right to Live in
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"An institution is any place in which people who have been labeled as having an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated and/or congregated. An institution is any place in which people do not have, or are not allowed to exercise control over their lives and their day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size."

Deinstitutionalization Task Force



FALL 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE TASK FORCE

**Norm McLeod and Shane Haddad,
Task Force Co-chairs**

We know that deinstitutionalization is more complex than simply closing large institutions, more than just destroying buildings that once served as places where persons with intellectual disabilities lived (and died). Yet on October 18, 2011 it was not possible to deny an incredible feeling of fulfillment and hope for the future as the final section of the Woodlands Centre Block was demolished.

While Woodlands was not the first institution to be closed in Canada, the process of its closure has become a central part of the deinstitutionalization story in Canada. Led by parents like Jo Dickey, families demanded change; demanded that government provide their sons/daughters with a life in community, and in doing so inspired countless thousands of other families to do the same. Joined by the efforts and voices of self advocates, the Woodlands closure served as a model for other provinces and territories. The efforts and successes in British Columbia greatly accelerated closures throughout the country.

The Task Force, on behalf of the Canadian Association for Community Living and People First of Canada, would extend congratulations to the many self advocates, families and community organizations whose efforts over the past years have finally led to this historic moment. A moment that for all of us symbolizes the final destruction of the walls that keep persons with intellectual disabilities out of community; symbolizes triumph in their demand to assume a rightful place in community.

**TAKE DOWN
THE WALLS.**

Bill Killer

MESSAGE FROM BC PEOPLE FIRST

On behalf of the BC People First Society, I want to congratulate all the former residents of the Woodlands Institution — the survivors. Your voices were heard and you have achieved a major victory. The centre block of Woodlands, the last remaining building on the institution site was torn down on Tuesday, October 18th. The demolition symbolized the closing of a chapter in history. The next chapter is to see that former residents everywhere are fully supported to live in the community; and are apologized to and compensated for the harm that was done to them.

I also want to recognize the former residents who are no longer with us. They helped to lead the battle to close institutions everywhere. They shared their stories which paved the way to changing attitudes and making positive changes for everyone. They were in our hearts on October 18th and will remain there always.

BC People First is proud to be part of this national movement that supports the rights of all people with disabilities to live in the community as equal citizens. We will continue to work with you to fight the good fight.

Lorie Sherritt,
President, BCPF

MESSAGE FROM BCACL

As we mark the demolition of the Woodlands Centre Block we thank all those individuals, families, community members and organizations who helped us arrive at this historic moment. We remember those who stood up and said no one belongs in institutions; those who challenged governments who justified the institution under so many false pretexts; those who never lost sight of a simple yet profound truth, that no one should be confined in places like Woodlands, not in 1878, not in 1958, not in 1974 not in 1998 and not in 2011. No then, not now, not ever.

We also remember and honour the thousands who died in Woodlands and those who somehow survived it. In demolishing the structure we are part of releasing the ghosts that inhabit this structure, the bricks and mortar that hold the memories of terrible things we are still reconciling and demanding redress for. Things that never should have happened yet did.

We know that by tearing down this structure we are not wiping out what went on within its walls. Rather we are honouring — finally — the wishes of former residents who continue to be traumatized by the mere sight of this structure — for what it represents and for the memories contained within.



Photo by Meaghan Feduk, PFBC

In its destruction, some measure of peace is reclaimed and a step towards reconciliation is made. With its destruction, we reclaim the humanity that the Centre Block stole from the people who were forced to live there. This must be seen as a celebration of reclaiming personal power and embracing what we can no longer deny — that community is for everyone. No exceptions, absolutely no exceptions.

The struggle to have the Centre Block destroyed inspired public conversation and social change. As a result the site will become a new public garden. This will provide the opportunity and space for the whole community to acknowledge what happened here and for the community to

be part of the healing process. The space will be transformed into a place of peace, to learn and relearn the lessons that we are not that far removed from. Woodlands is closed but other places like it are still open today in Canada, reminding us that denying humanity lurks not just under the surface but out in the open and that we are only steps away from what is being torn down today. So let us all know the truth, let us show each other what it really means to be human, let us embrace each other in our hearts and actions. Let us say so long and good riddance to the remains of a crumbling old building and by doing so release us to a new day.

Faith Bodnar,
Executive Director, BCACL

FORMER RESIDENTS CHEER AS TAINTED WOODLANDS DEMOLISHED

By Andy Ivens, *The Province*, October 19, 2011
Reprinted with permission

As demolition began on the last part of Woodlands School in New Westminster on Tuesday afternoon, a heartfelt cheer erupted from a throng of about 200 former residents and their supporters.

Within minutes, some of the victims of physical and sexual abuse at the infamous institution, run by the provincial government for children with developmental problems, were hugging and weeping openly, gripped in a moment of joy and terrifying memories.

"I wanted this torn down for years and years," said Leonard Zimmer, a former Woodlands resident.

"Every time I go past here on my way to Port Coquitlam, it brings back a lot of memories of the abuse [that went on] here.

"I suffered a lot of abuse." Carol Dauphinais was sent to Woodlands in the 1960s after being sexually abused by family members and labelled a "moron" by psychologists.

"I spent two years here, but I died a thousands deaths," she said above the din of ancient brick walls crashing to the ground.

Zimmer, who doesn't qualify for compensation because of a time-based legal technicality, said he would like to see a settlement for all survivors of Woodlands School.

He left Woodlands before Aug. 1, 1974, when the Crown Proceedings Act took effect, making him and others ineligible to sue the government over abuse that took place before that date.

Despite calls for justice for the pre-1974 victims, Attorney-General Shirley Bond is sticking by the decision not to expand the number of people eligible for compensation, now standing at about 750.

"The B.C. government reached a settlement process with the former residents who participated in the class action proceeding and is committed to resolving the individual claims as quickly as possible," Bond said in an email to *The Province*.



Photo by Meaghan Feduk, PFBC

Today is a triumphant moment for me. It's a dream come true. I never believed in a thousand years that I could live to see this place knocked down.

Carol Dauphinais

HOW COULD ANYONE WANT TO KEEP A PLACE LIKE THAT STANDING?

Babs Stewart (based on interview Diane Offerbein, October 26, 2011)

My son, Brock lived at Woodlands School from the age of 6-21 years. He is now 52 and living the life he deserves, in the community where he belongs. His success was helped by the fact that the community was ready and waiting for him when he left Woodlands.

When my son was in the school, there was nothing for him to do. He was a part of a group of 30 people. They would go into a great big day room — Brock would choose a corner of that day room, back himself in and play with his shoe laces.



As a Mother, I knew in my heart of hearts that this was not the life I wanted him to have.

Now, Brock gets up every day, goes out and lives in HIS community. He is known and truly supported in ways that meet his needs. He does not use words to communicate but his voice is heard by those who support him. He really has a good to great quality of life. We are 5 minutes away and he loves to come over to our house for dinner and he loves to go home when supper is over.

When the closure came, there were some parents who had a difficult time with it. Fear of the unknown I think. I even remember being told by a few of the staff that there was “no way he would be able to make it in the community. You’ll be back, they said.” How could I have responded to such a lack of belief in Brock and in us as parents. We had a good experience coming out.

When we read in the paper that the last piece of the institution had come down, I felt a sense of relief. No sadness at all — It would have been a very bad idea to restore those buildings. I sleep better knowing that Woodlands is gone forever and it feels good to know that my son can sleep better too.

SURVIVING LABELS AND LIES: THE TRIUMPH OF CAROL DAUPHINAIS

Fred Ford with Carol Dauphinais

When Carol Dauphinais arrived at Woodlands at the age of 17 on January 23, 1961, she was already a survivor of child abuse in her family home, where physical and sexual violence and all night drinking bouts were the norm.

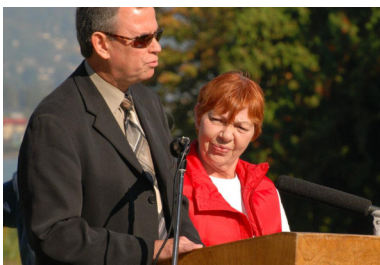


Photo by Aaron Johannes

The Victoria Family Services Department records note “Carol and her sister Emma would ‘take to the bush’ during these evenings and remain there all night” to escape the abuse, often sleeping under trees on snowy nights. Malnourished, abused and sleep-deprived from an early age, Carol’s development was adversely affected. She was small for her age and struggled at school. Yet no one attributed her development and behavior to her horrific home life. Instead, she was identified as the problem. She was labeled “retarded” by her social worker and others, a label that haunted Carol and in her view, triggered her institutionalization and further brutalization at Woodlands.

Arriving at the institution in New Westminster, Carol was told nothing about where she was or why she was there. She was placed alone in a day room that smelled of urine and where “strange people” milled about, “kept touching me...stared at me, drooled, made noises”. In the hours, days and years to come, Carol would encounter an environment, a system and patterns of behaviour which were not created that January day, but which had evolved over decades. And nothing could have prepared her for her introduction to the culture of Woodlands:

"It seemed like hours later, when a nurse called me and told me she'd take me to my room. I shot out of the day room, but slowed down in the hall. It was another new world there. There was too much to see, and I was afraid to move fast, because I didn't know what would happen next. The nurse startled me when she gave me a shove to hurry me along and I automatically shoved her back. She yelled, "we've got a violent one." In a second, it seemed, I was grabbed by two other people, dragged into a small room, stripped and left sitting on the floor without even a blanket. On her way out, the nurse shouted, "you're not in G.I.S. (Girl's Industrial School) now." With the door shut and locked I felt safe, but I was mortified. I felt I'd been treated like an animal."

"There was a lot of slapping at Woodlands and while I had to get used to it in a hurry, it took me a while to make sense of it...The way I figured it, once they labelled you retarded, they decided you had no feelings."

"To be slapped and kicked, shoved with a broom handle, to have my arm twisted and to be yelled at were normal everyday things here, just like they'd been at home. Except here it was worse: at home I could run out and hide in the bush but here I was caught."

Carol ran away from the institution many times. In 1963, on the way back to Woodlands from a visit with her grandparents, Carol was kidnapped by her father and abused for months before managing to escape. Carol made her way back to Vancouver where she was fortunate to meet a woman who took her into her home and helped her on a path to independence and self-worth. Carol went on to work in the health care system. She became a union steward and she fought for the rights of both patients and workers.

In 2000, Carol won the *Courage to Come Back* award for her powerful and disturbing memoir, *Living with Labels and Lies*.

Today, Carol is retired and lives in Chilliwack, BC with her husband Ernie, where she continues to advocate for the rights of children and people with disabilities. Carol continues to call for compensation of all former Woodlands residents, including the currently excluded pre-1974 survivors, many of whom experienced the kinds of abuses that Carol has chronicled in her book.

BREAKING THROUGH: THE FINAL PIECE OF A HORRID PLACE

Jacki Maniago (based on interview with Diane Otterbein, October 25, 2011)

I have a son, Norman.

When I think about the last vestiges of Woodlands, I am glad it is done. The demo was a reminder of what went on in there. It did my heart good to see it come down. There was some talk of restoring those old buildings. I think that would have been much more difficult to drive by and see the place where terrible things happened to our kids; to see the buildings all shiny and new. The next use for that land will not have anything attached to the Woodlands history, except the land on which it stands.



Photo by Meaghan Feduk, PFBC

The structure is gone... but the attitudes that kept it open and standing as long as it did still linger in the air. The community still has such a long way to go. As far as we have come, we are still doing so much damage with labels and with trying to make people fit into a model instead of creating a life that works for each person.

The closure helped open up the community. There is no doubt in my mind that closure was a great thing. However, families still need more support than they are getting. All these years later, parents are still forced to fight for the rights of their kids and young adults; fighting for funding and for individualization.

I am so happy to see this hellhole fall to the ground!
Barb Westfield

The government is providing far better support to families with young kids than ever before, right up until they turn 19. That's when they (government) blow out the candles and turn out the lights. From the moment the person is considered an adult, labeling and segregation begin all over again. Families still need help to dream and for it to be okay to have expectations of and for their kids. I have expectations of my son Norman, just as I have expectations of my other kids. The disability doesn't mean

you should expect nothing. Someone needs to help parents make their dreams come true. That's where the energy should go.

Individualized funding vs: cookie cutter models... That debate rages on long after the closures and demolitions. As good as it feels to know that we will never have to look at that building again, the demolition of other barriers to inclusion are still needed.

My son has good support in his own home and this is something we need to keep a watchful eye on. In order to prevent institutionalizing the community, we need to make sure that staff don't burn out and we need to keep pressing government to do the right thing for each individual.

I don't want to think about this every day but I still do. Woodlands is gone but there is still a pile of rubble to go through.

A GREAT THING IN CANADIAN HISTORY

Peter Bourne, People First member and former resident of Woodlands (as interviewed by Ludo VanPelt)



Would you like to share some thoughts for the day?

This is a great thing in Canadian history. It hadn't never been done before, this is the first province of British Columbia where it ever been done and I think, right now, I know Bennington is smiling down upon us right now, and uh, wow, it's...what can I say?

Why was it important to you to see this building demolished?

I think that people like to put the past behind us, and people don't want to think about it when they see that building. It is an end of the chapter and I think people

like to go on with their lives, they don't like to look at the building and it's good to see the building demolished. As Michael Buffer said, "Let's get ready to rumble"!

What does this day mean to you?

I think this is a pretty inspiring day. I left Woodlands in 1969 its hard to believe but this is 2011, and it's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. Like the song said, we shall overcome, it's time to look on the positive side not the negative, and I believe people will overcome. It can be done. We've seen so many negatives about the closure and that institution; now that the institution is closed it's one of the best and positive things and the best thing that ever happened to people who were in institutions to see the institution closed.

Where do you think we need to go from here?

I think we need to go a little step forward now, so people to have right to have more money, more settlement but it has to be in a positive way. I know people are angry, and like Bill said the government is pushing people around. I think we do a far better job that the government does because we can get things done, and we *will* get things done. If we can't get the government to, we have to take matters into our own hands. I don't mean in a violent way, but it's up to us to take matters into our own hands.

Finally, we can have peace.
Richard McDonald

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOODLANDS

Fred Ford

Woodlands institution opened in New Westminster on May 17, 1878 as the Provincial Asylum for the Insane, later re-named the Provincial Hospital for the Insane. In 1950 it was renamed Woodlands School and in 1974 the name was changed again — to Woodlands. Although the asylum was originally presented as a modern approach to treating “lunatics” and the “feeble-minded,” it was soon criticized as gloomy and unfit for its purpose of caring for people today referred to as having psychiatric disabilities and intellectual disabilities.

The philosophies of care and treatment changed over the decades, from custodial care and confinement to hospital or medical care to vocational training, education and development. In the 1920's, authorities decided that the Woodlands site would serve only people with intellectual disabilities, and other residents were moved to Essondale. While there were many exemplary staff at Woodlands and notable efforts — as early as 1885 — to ensure appropriate treatment of residents, inquiries and investigations into conditions, treatment and mistreatment of residents occurred in virtually every decade of Woodlands' existence.

Abuse and overcrowding were problems throughout its history. By the late 1950's there were approximately 1,400 people living at Woodlands.

Due largely to the advocacy efforts of families, in 1981 the provincial government announced plans to close Woodlands. Community placements were planned and implemented over the next 15 years and Woodlands finally closed in 1996.

Following the closure, in response to allegations by former residents of abuse at Woodlands, the Province asked former BC Ombudsman Dulcie McCallum to conduct an independent review. In August 2001, McCallum submitted a report, called *The Need to Know: Administrative Review of Woodlands*. The government released the report and their response to it in July 2002. The report confirmed there was evidence of physical, emotional and sexual abuse at Woodlands, and that the abuse was systemic in nature — in other words, the way Woodlands operated contributed to the occurrence of abuse. The report made 12 recommendations about steps the government should take next, including doing a more in-depth review of abuse at BC institutions and making an apology to people who were abused.

In response to the McCallum report, the BC Self Advocacy Foundation and the Woodlands Parents Action Group held consultations throughout the province with former residents and family members. Reports from these consultations supported McCallum's recommendations. The former residents also called for the demolition of the institution buildings and a role for themselves in the demolition. The Centre Block was demolished on October 18, 2011 with former residents leading the ceremony and signaling for the demolition to commence.

A class action lawsuit was launched against the provincial government on behalf of former residents in 2002. In 2009 a settlement was proposed and was approved by the court in 2010. Cases are currently being adjudicated. Due to a legal loophole, Woodlands survivors discharged from the institution before August 1974 are currently excluded from the settlement process. Woodlands survivors and their supporters provincially and nationally are currently urging the provincial government to include all survivors in the settlement.



In the course of my stay here I saw unspeakable atrocities committed against not only myself but other former residents as well... am just so totally angry at how this government has treated the survivors of Woodlands, I'm not sure I can express it in words... And if you think that this destruction, this symbolic knocking down of this building will bring closure, it will not. The only way that closure will happen is when all the victims of Woodlands gain the respect, recognition and compensation that they deserve.

Bill McArthur

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

We encourage you to submit stories, Provincial/Territorial updates, pictures and/or personal perspectives on this issue. Please send all contributions directly to Don Gallant at dgallant@nl.rogers.com for publication in our next edition (due out in January 2012).

Have you signed the Declaration of Support for Community Living?

This Declaration of Support for Community Living can be accessed at

<http://www.institutionwatch.ca/>

Please visit this site and sign our declaration, and the Task Force would ask that you share this site among your various organizations and networks.

WE, INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY, commit to working together to assist persons to return to their communities and call on all levels of government in this country to:

- Acknowledge that institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities have no place in today's society;
- Stop financing or otherwise supporting the establishment of new institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Stop all new admissions to existing institutions;
- Support the right of all people with disabilities to live in the community as equal citizens;
- Commit the necessary resources to support the development of quality, comprehensive community-based alternatives to institutional care;
- Acknowledge the wrongs that have been committed against those individuals who have been held for far too long in institutions across this country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CACL and People First of Canada gratefully acknowledge the Government of Canada (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada – Disability Component of the Social Development Partnerships Program) for supporting our national Community Inclusion Initiative.

The opinions and interpretations expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

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