

THE VOICE

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The Woodlands Memorial Garden

by Pat Feindel

Did you know that Woodlands institution had a cemetery? When the BC Self Advocacy Foundation did a project interviewing former residents, that's one of the things people talked about. Yet when people went to look at it, they couldn't find it. That's because it had been closed down and almost all the grave markers taken away. The only thing left was a grassy park with some big trees and a small memorial stone at one side. About nine of the original markers were left on the cemetery land – mostly under trees where they weren't easy to see.

Between the 1920s up until the 1950s, many people who lived at Woodlands or at Essondale (now Riverview Mental Health Hospital) were buried in the cemetery at Woodlands when they died. This

was the final resting place of over 3,000 people with no family to bury them.



Former resident Richard McDonald restores a headstone.

In 1976 the cemetery was closed when Queens Park Hospital was built beside it. That's when the grave markers were taken away. Many were recycled and used as paving stones. Some were even used to build a patio and barbeque pit used by Woodlands staff. Some were used in the ravine near Woodlands to hold back the earth along the stream.

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Former residents, family members and community volunteers meet to plan public information for Woodlands Memorial Garden

In 1997, the BC Self Advocacy Foundation (BCSAF) did an oral history project with former residents of institutions and heard stories about the cemetery. A piece about it was included in the art show *From the Inside /OUT!*

Then the BC Association for Community Living and BCSAF got together and decided the cemetery should be restored. They persuaded the provincial government to pay for this and help organize it, since they had allowed the stones to be taken away.

A group of interested volunteers came together to work on the Woodlands Memorial Garden, and formed a Steering Committee. The Committee includes former residents and family members, along with staff from BCACL, a college teacher, and a person from the provincial government who manage government land and buildings. Richard McDonald has been an active member of the Committee since it began. He represents BCSAF.

The Committee managed to gather about 500 grave

stones that were saved. With help from Douglas College students and other volunteers, they have cleaned up the stones and made a computer list of all their names. These stones will be returned to the cemetery in memorial walls.

The Committee hired a landscape architect named Erik Lees to create a design for the Woodlands Memorial Garden. The garden will have memorial walls that include the names of everyone who was buried there.

The memorial will respect the memory of those who lived and died in institutions. It will also help teach people in the community about the history of institutions and remind people never to open institutions again.



Volunteers Lori Seay and Jojo Adan working on headstone restoration

The planning for the Woodlands Memorial Garden started several years ago, and construction began in November 2004. BCACL hopes it will be finished in 2005.



Landscape architect Erik Lees shows plans to family members of former residents, Cathy Anthony and Bob Keill

For more information on the cemetery project, see the BCACL web site at www.bcacl.org and click on "Issues" in the blue index and then "Institutions."

Climb for Community Living Mount Kilimanjaro 2006

Have you ever imagined climbing a mountain? A team of 16 self advocates and 29 supporters from British Columbia are going to do it. They are training right now to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. This is an exciting new project of the BCACL and 16 of its member associations.

In February 2006, this great team will get on a plane, fly 18 hours, and find themselves on the sandy plains of Tanzania. This will be the first step of a nine-day trip that will take them 19,341 feet up the highest mountain in Africa to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro.

What is the fundraising GOAL? Each climber has a goal: to raise \$1 for every foot of the climb – that's 19,341 feet – a lot of money for community living!

Would you like to HELP? Here are some ideas. We need all the volunteer power we can get!

1. Do you have some spare change? Donate it to one of our climbers. Call your local association and find out how.
2. Want to have a party? Invite all your friends for a summer BBQ, tell them about this exciting project and ask for their support.
3. Need more ideas? Call your local association and join one of their fundraising events.

Why are they doing the CLIMB? There are so many reasons why these self advocates have taken on this huge challenge.



- They want to raise money for community living.
- They want to let everybody know about community living.
- They want to prove that we all have dreams and we can reach those dreams with support from the community.
- They want to teach people that British Columbia is a place where *everyone belongs*.

Let's all help them! Join the Climb for Community Living, Mt. Kilimanjaro 2006. Support our climbers in any way you can. Call your local association for more information or check BCACL's web site at www.bcacl.org



Public Guardian and Trustee Reports on Woodlands Project

After the Ministry of Children and Family Development released the report on abuse at Woodlands called *The Need to Know* (July 2002), they gave many of the files from Woodlands to the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee (PGT). These were the files of people who might have been abused at Woodlands, an institution for people with developmental disabilities.

The PGT created a Woodlands Project Team who looked over all the files and contacted all of the people who might have been abused. They wanted to make sure that those people knew about Dulcie McCallum's report and got information about what they could do. The PGT helped people get their Woodlands files and find out more about their legal rights.

The PGT also made a database record of what kinds of abuse were mentioned

in the files, things that happened to individual people, and things that happened to lots of people because of policies, like overmedication. All the personal information gathered in the project is private and cannot be read or seen by anyone else without the former resident's permission.

The PGT finished this project on June 30, 2004. In August 2004 they produced a report about what they did on the project. The report talks about:

- What the team learned about Woodlands and other institutions;
- What happened to people at Woodlands
- Where former residents of Woodlands can get help;
- What former residents can do.

You can read or listen to the report at www.trustee.bc.ca/woodlands.htm

Self Advocates Appointed to the Board of Community Living BC

After many months of lobbying by self advocates across the province, the board of directors of Community Living BC (CLBC) has added two self advocate board members.

Amanda Lennard and George Fulcher joined the board in March 2005.

They will represent self advocates at CLBC. CLBC is responsible for many services to people with developmental disabilities in BC.



**CONGRATULATIONS
George and Amanda!**

Class Action Filed

When the government's report on abuse at Woodlands was made public in 2002, a private law firm called Poyner Baxter filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of people who were abused at Woodlands. This means the lawyers will use one court case to try to get compensation (money) for all the people who were abused at Woodlands.

A few months later, the Public Guardian and Trustee also filed a class action. There was a long court process to decide who should represent the class action, because there can only be one. The court decided it should be Poyner Baxter.

The next step was for the court to decide if the people who lived at Woodlands could be considered a "class" under the law. The court decided that yes, they can. That means that people who lived at Woodlands can go ahead with the lawsuit as a group, instead of everyone having to try and get compensation separately.

Now the lawyers for the class action must try to make sure that everyone who might be part of the group gets information about the class action. You can help by spreading the word and telling anyone who lived at Woodlands about this class action case.

This is a very important case, and the first of its kind in Canada. It will take a long time to go through the courts.

BCACL and many former residents asked the BC government to compensate people who were abused without making them go



to court, but the government has said they won't. They will only give compensation if a court says they have to. So the class action will have to go ahead.

If you do not want to be part of the class action, you can tell the court you don't want to. This is called "opting out."

For more information about the class action, you can go to the web site of **Poyner Baxter** or contact their office:

Web site: www.poynerbaxter.com

Phone: (604) 988-6321

E-mail: poyner.baxter@telus.net

You can also find more information on the BCACL web site at www.bcacl.org, click on "Issues" and then "Institutions."

A rectangular advertisement with a black border. At the top, it says "The Self Advocate Show" in a stylized font. Below that, it says "Vancouver CO-OP Radio 102.7 f.m.". In the center, there is a cartoon illustration of a person with glasses and a microphone, sitting at a desk with a radio. To the right of the illustration, it says "YOU SHOULD LISTEN CUZ WE MIGHT BE TALKING ABOUT YOU!". At the bottom, it says "FRIDAYS from 2:00 - 2:30". The radio station logo "CFRO fm" is visible on the desk.

Plain Language Helps Include Everyone

In North America, there are millions of people who cannot read, and many other people who don't read well. The use of



plain language in everyday writing helps many people understand information and act according to what they know. What does plain language mean? It means using easy-to-understand words and clear sentence structures. It does not mean basic language or boring writing.

Our language and the words we use are always changing. Acronyms (letters standing for phrases like the letters ASAP standing for the phrase As Soon As Possible) are heard and seen a lot in speaking and writing. New words to do with computer technology come up in everyday conversations (we may not know what “spamming” and “formatting” mean). Words sometimes become slang and are used with different meaning (for example, the word “bad” can mean “good”).

With all of this happening to our way of speaking and writing, plain language can be a powerful tool. It can be powerful because it reaches a wider audience — more people can read and understand what you are saying. People who do not read well can often understand what they hear and see in plain language.

How do you write in plain language? It's easy! The following tips on how to use plain language to include everyone were

provided by People First of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Words. Think about your choice of words:

- Cut out unnecessary words
- Avoid jargon (“buzz words”)
- Explain technical terms in brackets
- Explain complex ideas
- Don't change verbs into nouns (use “requires” instead of requirement)

Paragraphs and Sentences. Think about your choice of paragraphs and sentences:

- Limit paragraphs and sentences to one idea
- Use active sentences (use “will go” instead of “will be going”)
- Keep sentences and paragraphs clear and short
- Use words that are familiar
- Do not use more words than necessary to make a point

Printed Material. When printing information:

- Use dark print for people with sight problems
- Large print is often easier to read
- Do not use all capital letters, words written in upper and lower case letters are clearer
- Use type that's easy to read
- Use page numbers, tables of contents, lists, and headings to help the reader
- Don't put too many words on a page, leave lots of “white space”

If we all try to use plain language, we will include everyone and get a clear message across!

“Everyone Belongs” BCACL Conference

Mark your calendars for BCACL's 50th Anniversary Conference and AGM, held **September 29th – October 1st 2005** at the Vancouver Airport Conference Resort in Richmond.

This year the BCSAF is co-sponsoring the conference, and celebrating their 20th Anniversary. The conference will include a gala event to kick off Community Living Month on October 1st.

Top 10 Reasons to Attend

1. Change your life by meeting other people who believe in change.
2. Renew your commitment to inclusion
3. Where else can you learn by day and dance with 600 people by night?
4. Grab your chance to become BC's first Community Living Idol!
5. Be inspired by the creativity, humour and wisdom of self advocates and their allies
6. BCACL turns 50 in 2005 and BCSAF turns 20: help us celebrate at the best banquet and party ever!
7. Richmond is the mall capital of the lower mainland – get an early start on that holiday shopping!
8. Surprising and fun sessions and activities
9. See old friends and meet new ones
10. Three days with nine coffee breaks, three parties, and over 75 sessions – how many reasons do you need?

Caucus Elections

The BC Association for Community Living (BCACL) Self Advocacy Caucus will hold its election at the BCACL Conference.



The Caucus election will happen on October 1, 2005. Any BC self advocate attending the conference can vote in the Caucus election.

The Self Advocacy Caucus is made up of 14 self advocates from around the province. This year, there are 5 positions open on the Caucus for a 2-year term. The following regions have positions open for nominations:

Lower Mainland West (1 position)
Okanagan/Central Interior (1 position)
Upper Fraser Valley (1 position)
Vancouver Island Coastal (1 position)
Kootenays (1 position)

Please note that the North and Lower Mainland East regions are already represented by self advocates who have 1 year left to serve. So, nominations will not be accepted from those regions.

Any self advocate may run for the Caucus, but for their region only. If you want to represent the self advocates in your region, please pick up information about the Caucus election at your local association for community living.

Update: The BC Institutional Legacy Trust Fund

At the Information Session for former residents of BC Institutions, held on May 5 in Vancouver, participants heard what has happened with the BC Institutional Legacy Trust Fund (or “Legacy Trust Fund” for short). They also heard about plans for the future. Important parts of this information are provided here in the form of questions and answers. You may wish to go over this with a support person so that you can talk about any questions that come up.

The Office of the Advocate for Service Quality would like former residents, family members and others to share ideas about these plans. You can do this at meetings around BC during the month of June. To find out where and when the meetings are, contact the Advocate for Service Quality (see how to get in touch with her at the end of this article).

Questions and Answers about the Legacy Trust Fund:

What is the Legacy Trust Fund?

The Legacy Trust Fund is a two-million dollar fund set up in 2003, by the provincial government and the Victoria Foundation. There are many rules about how the fund must be set up and funds can be used. These rules are part of a “Trust Agreement.”

The purpose of the Legacy Trust Fund is to give out money for services (including counselling and personal support) to former

residents and family members of Woodlands, Glendale Lodge, Tranquille and Endicott Centre.

An Advisory Committee including former residents and family members will review applications for funds.

What has happened since the Legacy Trust Fund was set up?

In 2003, Jane Holland, the Advocate for Service Quality, worked with the Victoria Foundation, community and MCFD representatives to figure out the rules and purpose of the Trust Fund and how to choose the Advisory Committee.

In 2004, former residents and family members of former residents were appointed to select the Advisory Committee. They helped to come up with a selection process, reviewed applications and checked references. They selected an Advisory Committee in June 2004. In July 2004, a lawyer representing 14 former Woodlands residents filed a petition to the Court objecting to the way the Advisory Committee was selected.

Early in 2005, lawyers from both sides agreed to do the selection process over again.

How will the new Advisory Committee be chosen?

Former residents of BC institutions and their family members will choose the new advisory committee. They will follow the rules of the Trust Agreement.

Here is a step-by-step guide to what will happen:

In July the Advocate for Service Quality (Jane) will appoint former residents and family members to the Selection Committee.

In July and August the Selection Committee will learn about their job and make plans for selecting the Advisory Committee.

Around September the Selection Committee will call for Advisory Committee nominations.

Around October the Selection Committee will pick the Advisory Committee.

Around October and November the Advisory Committee will learn their job and plan how to give out funds.

Around December the Advisory Committee will put its plan into action.

How can I give my ideas or get more information?

You can give your ideas about this plan, and find out more information about the Legacy Trust Fund, by calling the Office of the Advocate for Service Quality.

Vancouver: **(604) 775-1238**

Outside Vancouver: Call Enquiry BC **(250) 387-6121** (Victoria)

or **1-800-663-7867** (everywhere else)

Ask for the office of the Advocate for Service Quality.

Information is available on the Victoria Foundation's web site at:

www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca/programs/BCInstitutionalLegacy.htm

My New Job Plan

By Richard McDonald, SAF President

This job came up when I thought of it. On Friday when I phoned up Philip Tan of 24 Hours newspaper, I told him my plan about picking up newspapers at all Sky-train stations.

Then I talked to Lori Seay at BCACL. I told her about the plan. While I was at her office, she called POLARIS and talked to Linda Delparte. Lori told her about the plan to set up the work program for other handicapped people so they can have extra money to get things that they need.



I believe it is time for us to get out to work as a team. It is our right.

My job interview will be soon. I am glad I thought of this plan. We have to get out there to work, or we will have problems on down the line.

Thank you!

Speak Out Against Expanding Institution in Manitoba

The government of Manitoba is not listening to self advocates. They plan to spend \$40 million to redevelop an institution called the Manitoba Developmental Centre (MDC). They want to do this even though they know many people want the money to go to community living instead. If you are concerned and would like to do something about it, you can write a letter to the Premier of Manitoba.

Your letter can include:

- Why you are concerned
- Your personal stories about institutions
- Your personal stories about community living

Letters can be sent by mail to:

**The Honourable Gary Doer
Premier of Manitoba**

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8

You can also e-mail or fax the letter to:

E-mail: premier@leg.gov.mb.ca

Fax: (204) 949-1484



Celebrate Community Living Month in October!

Visit www.bcacl.org to see what events are being hosted in your community.

If you are hosting an event, please let us know so we can tell everyone about it.

For more information about community living month or to order **free** supplies like posters, stickers or balloons, please contact the BCACL office.

How to get involved

The Voice would like to hear from you! We are interested in stories from self advocates. You can write about your work, or your self advocate group, or your family. Or anything else you want other self advocates to know about.

The Voice is a small paper, so we may make your story shorter to fit on the page.

We love to hear from you. Please Write, phone, fax or e-mail us at:

The Voice
BC Self Advocacy Foundation
#300 - 30 East 6th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5T 4P4

Phone: 604-875-1119

Fax: 604-875-6744

E-mail: lseyay@bcacl.org

Political Rainbow from a Self Advocate Point of View

The rich is for The poor,
The poor is for The rich.

You never know what is going
to happen to The govern-ment.

They slip into Their pocket
for Their Lux-ury
first class This,
first class That.

They try to down size The
econ-omy for The dis-ability.

The government has The disa-
bility but we have The ability
to get out in The Comm-unity
to get our voices heard.

One says out, One says in.
That's how the voting is.

*Rap lyrics by Dale Froese, a
self advocate from Kelowna.*

Just Me

I have sat here often in wonder...
What it would be like to be normal.

I have wondered if my life would be
different than what it is.

Would I still be me or
would I be another person.

I wonder if I would be rich
or would I be in a good paying job
or what??

But all I can do is sit and wonder
for I will never be normal
like everyone else.

For I am just me
and that's all I will ever be
just wonderful me.

*A Poem by Sherry Shortman.
Sherry is a local leader in the Kamloops Self
Advocacy Group.*

The Voice would like to thank

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(604) 590-3230

for their support of BC charities, including
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What does “Self Advocate” mean?

A self advocate is a person who is learning to speak up for their rights. If you would like more information on self advocacy, call Lori Seay at the BC Self Advocacy Foundation, 604-875-1119.

If you want to start a self advocacy group in your area, we can come and talk with you about how a self advocacy group works.

The Voice

This issue of *The Voice* was put together by the following people:

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