



*Centre for Research & Education in Human Services*

# NewsReport

Volume 11:2 Winter 1997

## Through the Eyes of Individuals With Lived Experience Within Human Service Systems

The Centre for Research and Education in Human Services values the wisdom and insights of individuals who have lived experience within human service systems and therefore decided to dedicate this edition of the News Report to individuals' stories, perspectives, and ideas. Individuals who have lived experience with human service systems are sometimes called self-advocates, consumers, consumer/survivors, and/or self-helpers. Unfortunately these labels often result in the marginalization of individuals and their voices are often excluded or ignored. At the Centre, we believe that these voices are vital pieces of the community puzzle we are continually trying to learn about and understand. Through our work, we have witnessed and experienced the growth and process of empowerment that occurs for everyone when we work together as equal partners and truly listen to one another. We feel honoured that a number of individuals chose to share their stories in this NewsReport.

In her article, Anne Tschirhart expresses the frustration of not being valued or heard. She shares a common concern among psychiatric survivors, "How come the professionals are never interested in the things that I have to say until another professional puts my words in quotes and calls it research?" Anne shares her own story and urges us to listen to and include each other so that together we can build a holistic community.

Lisa Phillips describes her experience of living with mental health concerns and the stigma with which she and many others continue to battle. She also shares the incredible impact of being accepted and included as a partner within the Centre and Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health.

Jim MacLean writes about the realization of his

dreams as he has shared his story and ideas with others and has been heard. He believes that everyone needs a chance to dream and he now supports others in exploring their dreams.

Barry D'Costa reflects on how government cuts have left him and others in the consumer/survivor community feeling a loss of personal control over their lives. In these challenging times when the government fails to meet the needs of society's disadvantaged, support networks such as Waterloo Region Self Help are vital.

Barb Fowke shares her experiences in working on the "Violence Against Women who have Developmental Challenges: Prevention and Education" Project and stresses the importance of hearing and listening to the voices of individuals who have experienced the pain of violence.

Geoff Nelson reflects upon his own personal learnings in working with consumer/survivors in the "Shifting the Paradigm in Community Mental Health" study and the incredible impact of their involvement on both himself and the project. True community, Geoff believes, comes through relationships built upon mutual respect, understanding, communication, and trust.

Only when everyone is respectfully included can we work together towards a better world for everyone. As Martin Luther King wrote, "All life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality."

Thank-you to all of the contributors to this edition of the News Report. Together, you have helped to deepen our understanding of what we need to make our community whole.

Pat Fisher & Michelle Poechman Fisher



## Centre for Research & Education in Human Services

26 College Street

Kitchener, Ontario N2H 4Z9

Telephone: (519) 741-1318 Fax: (519) 741-8262

E-mail: cfre@kw.igs.net

Web Site : <http://www.crehs.on.ca>

The Centre for Research & Education in Human Services is an independent, non-profit organization established in 1982. The Centre works with professionals, consumers and other community members to create an understanding of human service policies and practices that affect citizens who have been disadvantaged.

The Centre works collaboratively with a wide range of groups and organizations in research, education and planning capacities.

The NewsReport is published twice a year. We hope to keep the community informed about the Centre's involvements and to address special issues.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Centre is committed to social change and the development of communities and human services that are responsive and supportive, especially for people with limited access to power and opportunity.

Demonstrating leadership through research, education and community involvement, the Centre stimulates the creation of awareness, policies and practices that advance equitable participation and integration of all members of our community.

### AT THE CENTRE WE BELIEVE THAT

- ▶▶ Each person needs to be valued and respected as a whole person.
- ▶▶ Each person has an inherent worth and the right to equitable participation and full integration.
- ▶▶ Enhancing personal growth requires collective and cooperative action, within a supportive and challenging environment.
- ▶▶ There is healing and empowerment when people tell their own stories.
- ▶▶ Learning with and from people is an ongoing journey which requires linking theory with practice and our personal and professional lives.
- ▶▶ Social justice can only be achieved when issues of power are confronted and when there is equitable distribution of power and resources.
- ▶▶ Social justice is advanced as people build on their stakeholder roles to move toward full citizenship and commitment to the greater good.
- ▶▶ Our research should be useful to the community and should contribute to constructive social change and improvement of people's lives.
- ▶▶ People have the right to access information and the tools that are used to gather that information.
- ▶▶ We can collectively create a better future through innovation and risk based on a critical understanding of the past.

Editor: Pat Fisher & Michelle Poechman Fisher  
Design & Layout: Terry Goodenough

The Centre **NewsReport** is published twice a year by the Centre for Research & Education, 26 College Street, Kitchener, ON N2H 4Z9.  
Phone: (519) 741-1318  
Fax: (519) 741-8262  
E-mail: cfre@kw.igs.net  
Web Page: <http://www.crehs.on.ca>  
Back issues are available for \$3 per copy.  
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ISSN 1203-3340

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## A Message From Our Coordinator

*A peaceful world is like a potluck dinner. Everyone gives something, everyone receives something. There is diversity and mutual respect. (Anonymous)*

Partnership and collaboration are at the core of all research activities at the Centre. They are anchored to a core of values and principles which guide our work. In our participatory action approach to research we try to put the principles of collaboration into practice by meaningful and useful participation of the stakeholders in all stages of the research process. We pay attention to power imbalances between participants and researchers and between consumers and other professionals.

Every day we learn more about the benefits of active participation in research processes and in community life. Every day we learn more about the nature of systems (both understood and invisible) that erode people's confidence and competence. It seems to be important to shift power and control through consumer participation, broadening the "ownership" base through development of true relationships, fostering innovation and breaking the circle of conventional ways of thinking. The collaborative framework of the Centre's work includes effective communication, active listening, recognizing knowledge and skills of all involved, mutual respect and trust as well as building shared vision for change.

During the last year we have learned more about involving consumer researchers in research projects. Two of our current projects have employed consumer researchers to strengthen research teams. The development of authentic, supportive relationships, good training and substantial involvement in all research decisions and activities are important factors in this process. These relationships speak of a "covenant" between the Centre and individuals, in contrast to the traditional "contract" which are a small part of the relationship. As Peter M. Senge stressed in his book 'The Fifth Discipline', a complete relationship needs a covenant, "a covenantal relationship rests on a shared

commitment to ideas, to issues, to values, to goals, and to management process. Covenantal relationships reflect unity and grace and poise" (p. 145). We also believe that they reflect diversity and mutual respect.

During the last year we have become more visible in the community. Two community forums were held in the fall. One focused on issues of violence against women with developmental challenges and the other on changes in community mental health. We communicated and disseminated our learnings from research projects in two *Centre NewsReports*, by participating in conferences, community presentations and running programme evaluation workshops. Also last September we held our first public annual meeting. The Board of Directors, staff, project participants, partners and friends of the Centre, together celebrated 15 years of the Centre's existence and operation. We reflected on the activities of 1996/97, and we all agreed that last year may be described as a year of growth. The areas and number of our research projects expanded significantly as well as the number of people working and supporting the Centre. While changes occurred in many aspects of our organization, the strong commitment to conduct collaborative research about innovation in human services has remained the same. This commitment and dedication to learning about how to make our community more responsive and inclusive to all community members has, in fact, been strengthened over the years.

The coming year promises to be another exciting one for the Centre. Currently we have five new proposals under review. During the next year we plan to further develop our educational work, through new workshops and an increased emphasis on student and consumer-researcher involvement at the Centre.

On behalf of all Centre staff and its Board of Directors, I would like to thank you for your ongoing support and faith in our work. We wish you all the best in the New Year and hope your holiday season will be peaceful and rewarding.

Be well, Joanna





## Creating an Inclusive Community by Anne Tschirhart

Discrimination and stigma remain two of the largest barriers that people with mental health issues encounter. To the psychiatric survivor community, eliminating these barriers remains a fundamental challenge.

The first time I was admitted to a psychiatric facility, I experienced the startling revelation that not only was medical science unable to cure me, but seeking help in the realm of psychiatry had served to undermine my social standing as a human being.

I was labeled.

The irony was that not only did I have to contend with society's mis-perceptions of a psychiatric disorder, I also had to contend with my own. Because, before I was diagnosed, I held the same mistaken beliefs as many people. I used to think that psychiatric patients were at the best, unable to function in the real world and, at the worst, a danger to society.

Upon reflection, I expect that I acquired these beliefs in much the same way as other people do, through a lack of accurate information, misrepresentation in the media and the lure of popular culture and its portrayal of all of society's villains as deranged lunatics. In hindsight, one of the positive experiences of being diagnosed with a mental illness was that it was a crash course in reality, a crash course in shattering a myth that I had previously held as truth.

Those of us who have had the experience of being labeled a psychiatric patient have also, inevitably, experienced the learning that having a mental health issue doesn't take away from our intelligence, ability, compassion and humanness.

I am the same person I was...only different.

I am different. Not because my mental health issue has made me into a different person but because quite a lot of people around me treat me as if I was different. And when I am treated like I am different, I become different. I become unsure of myself, alienated, isolated and I may even exhibit some of the signs of having a mental health problem because being treated with a lack of respect is one of the things that is known to contribute to mental health issues. The stigma attached to mental illness creates a vicious cycle. I believe that psychiatric survivors can

combat discrimination by working with others who are connected to groups and subgroups within society. There are a lot of marginalized and disenfranchised groups who fight similar battles.

The Centre has become a friend to the local psychiatric survivor movement and as the relationship has grown, so has the level of trust. Achieving a level of trust through continued involvement may seem like an easy and natural occurrence but the barriers to a trusting relationship have been many. The notion of research is not one that sits well with a lot of psychiatric survivors. Personally, I can seldom think of the word research without thinking of some of the more horrendous things that have been done in its name. I think of Dr. Ewing Cameron and his infamous LSD brain-washing experiments that were, with the approval and financial support of the Canadian Government, carried out on psychiatric patients. Research makes me think of all the abuse that has occurred over the years, and continues to occur, in a world where our scientific community has had license to exploit the institutionalized. In a lot of cases, I think our scientists remain unchallenged in the belief that this segment of the population is their own personal laboratory. So you can imagine how incredible it is that a psychiatric survivor initiative has come to work willingly and in partnership with a research facility.

Being involved with the participatory action research of the Centre is an exciting way to learn. The Centre doesn't do research for people, they do research with people. And the learning is two-way. When the Shifting Paradigm in Community Mental Health research project was first proposed to the members of Waterloo Region Self Help there was a fear of exploitation and many people expressed the following sentiment. "*How come the professionals are never interested in the things that I have to say until another professional puts my words in quotes and calls it research?*" There is truth in that sentiment. When people want to learn they review the literature and talk to the academics. Learning would be a lot less cumbersome and a lot less confusing if people could learn to learn from the source. The Centre for Research and Education works to empower the vulnerable members of our community in just that way.



Consistent with the participatory action research model, the Centre works with its stakeholders from the design stage and participants have and enjoy meaningful involvement in all stages of the research.

The Centre ensures that the voice of marginalized people does not get lost in the bureaucracy of research. They work to encourage marginalized people to become educators and they work to build a community that is responsive to the message of marginalized people.

My vision of an inclusive community is narrow. I may see the ways and means of creating a community that includes, in a meaningful way, people with mental health issues but I know little about the needs of other groups. I don't have the big picture. But I'm not worried because the people at the Centre for Research and Education specialize in big picture work. The Centre is currently involved with sixteen research projects from a wide range of contingencies.

We are each of us a part of the whole and when an individual or a group is excluded we, as a community, are incomplete, we do not function properly and we become truly disabled. The Centre for Research and Education holds an invitation for us to learn about each other, from each other. And as we learn, we begin to recognize that diversity is a blessing and a necessary ingredient in a holistic community.

### **Partnership Group**

We would like to express gratitude to our friends who joined the Centre Partnership Group, initiated in April 1997. To date, 33 partners who believe in our mission, are supporting the Centre through gifts, donations and contributions to our work. As you may be aware, the Centre has been without core funding since its founding in 1982. It is a real challenge to maintain our organization based solely on contract work and research grants. It is our goal to share learnings with a larger audience, and the support of the Partnership Group enables us to publish this NewsReport, write policy papers and journal publications. We believe that information exchange and communication with our network and our community are crucial. We would greatly appreciate your commitment and help to make this happen. You are invited to join our Partnership Group by completing and returning the enrollment form enclosed with this NewsReport.



As I was growing up, people treated me different. My friends saw me as someone who was very angry. My friends were often scared of me and treated me as an outcast, a troubled person. I lived in my own world, not able to understand why I felt the way I did.

My parents, teachers and relatives never understood me and never even tried to understand me. They didn't understand that there was more behind my behaviour than trying to cope with my brother's death.

I tried very hard to get better but it seemed like nothing helped. I went for help and spent a lot of time in the hospital. People never knew how much I was suffering with a mental illness. People seem to be able to understand and accept physical illnesses more easily than mental illnesses.

Society and the stigma around mental illnesses has a huge effect on people. There are a lot of misconceptions about it. People seem to think that people with mental illnesses need to be institutionalized and take medication for the rest of their life. Sometimes people associate people who struggle with mental illness with people who commit terrible crimes such as murder, rape, and abuse. All kinds of people commit crimes.

Society is only now becoming more educated about mental illness because people are helping each other through self-help groups, mental health agencies, and mental health programs, as well as getting support from their families and friends.

Places like the Centre for Research & Education and Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health and have helped me feel like a valuable person by inviting me to get involved. The Centre asked me to participate on the Evaluation Committee of Waterloo Regional Homes. This was the first time I had ever been asked to be on a Committee. I feel like the Centre has always welcomed me with open arms.

Waterloo Regional Homes has opened many doors for me in my life. They trusted me with responsibilities by offering me a part-time job. They have become a part of my family. With the help of other consumers, they have given me the strength and hope to have goals in life. With their help I have a reason to get out of bed in the morning and get ready to face what the day will bring.





## We All Need a Chance to Dream

by Jim MacLean

My name is Jim MacLean. I became involved with Opening New Doors about three years ago when I joined the Steering Committee. Opening New Doors is a community organization in the Waterloo Region that is working to create a more welcoming, supportive, and inclusive community for all people, including people with developmental challenges.

Since joining Opening New Doors, I have learned how to be a part of a group of people. I have learned how to help other self-advocates, and how to be a good leader and teach people. I have also begun to share my story and speak out about what I believe people need in order to be part of the community. It is important that everyone is included in our community. I speak up in meetings and at conferences and I often make presentations to students, other self-advocates, professionals, volunteers, and board members.

One of the most important things I've learned, is how to dream. And some of my dreams have come true! I was elected to the first Ontario Association for Community Living Self-Advocates' Council in 1996. Recently, I was elected as the Chairperson of this Council. Through my involvement on the Council I have been invited to be part of a provincial decision-making group. This group will make decisions about giving money for Community Inclusion projects. This November I spoke at the Canadian Association for Community Living Annual Conference in Halifax. My dream of helping other people with developmental handicaps has come true! I also have more friends and I have become engaged. These friendships are very important to me.

Without Opening New Doors, none of these things would have happened. I had a dream of helping other people, but did not know what to do. Everybody has dreams, but sometimes people need help to learn about dreams. I try to help other self-advocates learn how to dream by teaching a workshop called "Keeping Your Dreams Alive".

Opening New Doors has helped many people to grow stronger and to learn about being self-advocates. A group of self-advocates have formed the People Helping

People Group to welcome and support people who move from institutions into our community. This group just keeps getting bigger and bigger.

It is important for the community to learn about people with challenges and hear our messages so that everyone is included in the community. People need to know that everyone is the same in their hearts.

We Want to be Free  
A song by Jim MacLean

We're getting out of the institutions,  
Coming back into the community.  
We like to be with other people....  
We need friends to help us now,  
Friends with open arms and smiles,  
Friends who'll see us just the way we are.  
We want a life on our own,  
We'd like to have our own place to stay.  
To be able to go to church and have our own home.  
Yes sometimes our minds are thinking about things,  
Like shopping, movies, sports, and other things,  
Getting buses and how we'll work things out.  
We're finding things difficult,  
Counselors help us to learn, but we need more.  
Will you help us too?  
Help us to get the things we need,  
We want to see flowers, grass, and trees,  
Like the birds, we need to be free.  
Our brains are different than yours are.  
We're slow learning but we can still do  
the same things that you can do too.  
We know what we have to do,  
but we can only do what we can do  
Sometimes it's hard  
but we always do our best.  
We're getting out of the institutions,  
Coming back into the community.  
We like to be with other people....  
We need friends to help us now!  
Friends with open arms and smiles  
Friends who'll see us just the way we are.  
Help us to get the things we need  
We want to see flowers, grass, and trees,  
Like the birds, we need to be free.  
Like the birds, we need to be free.





## The Importance of Power and Control By Barry D'Costa

The investment made in the consumer/survivor community in 1991 by the NDP government was a life line for me and other psychiatric survivors. I came out of the hospital system in 1994 and became a member of Waterloo Region Self Help (WRSH). WRSH is a peer support project funded in 1991 by the NDP's consumer/survivor development initiative branch of the Ministry of Health. I have gained a lot of control over my own recovery and experienced personal growth in spite of my symptoms. The network of friends I have made at WRSH has helped me attain a lot of this control and growth.

Control over my life started to slip with the change of government in Ontario in 1995. The present Conservative government has slashed income support to a point where I and many survivors could not cover the cost of food and rent. This has a direct and adverse effect on our health and recovery. The government's cancellation of subsidized housing and rent control have caused despair among survivors as did the enormous cut in income support.

Current proposed changes by this government in redefining disability only appear fair and responsive, but are in fact measures that present further barriers for a person applying for support for the first time. WRSH has not forgotten the initial investment it received in the early 90's. In spite of the oppressive measures of the current government, WRSH is investing in its members by helping them in areas of empowerment such as self employment. Where the government has failed to meet the needs of society's disadvantaged people I have witnessed community groups like WRSH, churches, the Canadian Mental Health Association / Waterloo Regional Branch, Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health and other community groups support and help myself and many other psychiatric survivors.

I hope people in every community of our province realize the damage being done in Ontario by the present government. I hope we all use real common sense in the next election and return our great province to being compassionate and responsive to those who are marginalized, disadvantaged but no less equal than any other citizen of Ontario.



## Working Together in the Community to Stop Abuse by Barb Fowke

I have been volunteering as a member of the Advisory Committee for the "Violence against Women who have Developmental Challenges: Prevention and Education" Project since it began in March 1997. I decided to volunteer on this project because I have experienced abuse myself and I wanted to share my experience. I also wanted to help other people to talk about their experiences and feel good about themselves. I wanted to work towards stopping abuse in our community.

This project is important to me because it helps people to share their feelings about what happened to them and it helps people realize that being abused is not their fault. It is hard to talk about our experiences of abuse with other people. Abuse takes a long time to heal. Being involved in this Project helps people to feel better and to know that they are good people.

We have a good time in this Project. We share our experiences but we also like to have a laugh in between. We can't always be serious.

Being involved in this Project has helped me to grow and to be a better person. It has helped me to talk about my experiences and know that the abuse is not my fault. I used to feel like I was a bad person. I have learned that I am a good person.

I hope that this awful crime of abuse will stop. I also hope that people will hear us. We like to be heard, not to be hidden in the dark. We want people to hear that we have been abused, to believe us, and to help to make the abuse stop! It feels good when people listen to us and believe what we say.

Working on the "Violence Against Women who have Developmental Challenges" Project has been a very interesting experience. I hope that we will find ways to help stop abuse against women. I think the community needs to believe us first before we can make any changes. Then hopefully, there will be some changes: people will understand us and believe us; people will help us to get the help we need; more places will offer support; and the community will be a safer place for everyone and that will feel good!

Thank-you for listening, because we need to be heard.





## Consumer/Survivor Participation in the Study “Shifting the Paradigm in Community Mental Health: A Community Study of Implementation and Change” by Geoffrey Nelson

When I was asked to write about my thoughts about consumer/survivor participation in this research project which is being carried out through the Centre, I had to ask myself who the consumer/survivors are that are participating. What occurred to me is that I don't think much about the designation “consumer/survivor” for this project; rather, I think of individuals that I know, I think of particular people. Perhaps this is because the participation of people who are consumer/survivors has become so normal or common place on this project. We all know one another on a first-name basis; we tend to be like-minded about mental health issues since we are all committed to a different set of values and ways of working (different from the medical or rehabilitation models); we share past times and other interests among each other; and we have enjoyed food and even the odd glass of wine together. What this means to me is that consumer/survivor participation in research is fundamentally about relationships that are built on mutual respect, understanding, communication, and ultimately, trust. Through such relationships comes a sense of community.

There are several vehicles for consumer/survivor participation in this project. First, the Steering Committee, which is composed of the researchers, consumer/survivors, family members, and service-providers from each of the three organizations involved in the study (Canadian Mental Health Association/Waterloo Region Branch, Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health, Waterloo Region Self Help), meets monthly and makes decisions about all aspects of the research (planning, implementation, review of findings). Second, there is the Research Team, which includes consumer/survivor researchers who were hired from each of the three organizations, graduate students in Community Psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University, Centre staff, and, while we are not as directly involved as the others, John Lord and myself. This is a dynamic group, which has contributed ideas and energy to

the project. Finally, there is the National/Provincial Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from provincial and national organizations, including consumer/survivor organizations.

Partnerships between consumer/survivors and researchers are also about power. The different vehicles for participation, described above, provide different pathways for consumer/survivors to exercise power over the research process. Consumer/survivors have had an influence on both what we study and the way we study it and they have challenged us, the researchers, to think about how we do research. A simple example is that early in the research

process, representatives from Waterloo Region Self Help told us that an interview guide that we intended to use did not fit their circumstances. I think it took awhile before we fully understood this, but we eventually scrapped the old guide and jointly came up with something that worked. On another occasion, consumer/survivors told us that others do not

listen to them except when they read their quotes in our studies. That was a pretty powerful statement. So we invited participants to help us write project reports. Also, we have made presentations at two conferences about this study, in which both consumer/survivors and the researchers were presenters. The consumer/survivors have been so dynamic in their presentations that it has forced me to try to be more dynamic myself (I am working on it).

I want to end by saying that we have been quite fortunate in this project to enjoy good relationships, and that this stems, at least in part, from the types of positive partnerships that have developed between consumer/survivors and two of our local community mental health agencies. I know that in other communities, there is a great deal of conflict and division, because agencies have been unresponsive to consumer/survivors. So our experiences must be taken in context. However, our experiences also show that it is possible for researchers, service-providers, and consumer/survivors to work in genuine collaboration towards a vision of a better world for everyone.

**... consumer/survivor participation in research is fundamentally about relationships that are built on mutual respect, understanding, communication, and ultimately, trust.**





This project is about partnership and collaboration. Researchers work very closely with the three mental health organizations, sharing learnings in an ongoing way. The Steering Committee representing consumer / survivors and service providers guides the study actively, participating in each step. The research team includes researchers from the Wilfrid Laurier University, Centre for Research and Education and consumer – researchers involved with three community organizations.

At the end of Phase II we held a day long Community Forum where Steering Committee members and provincial / national advisors worked together to design desirable indicators of the emerging paradigm in community mental health.

### **Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) - Provincial Evaluation**

In the early part of November the CAPC Provincial Study Team facilitated two sessions at the CAPC/CPNP Provincial Conference. CAPC stands for the Community Action Program for Children and CPNP is the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program. Many CAPC sites also administer CPNP. The November Conference “*Working Together: Making a Difference*” was organized by the CAPC/CPNP Coalition which is comprised of project coordinators and staff. One of the issues addressed by the Coalition was how to increase participant involvement in this annual conference. Many of the presentations were conducted by staff and/or evaluators of CAPC/CPNP projects.

Our presentations were intended to bring conference participants up to date on the Ontario CAPC evaluation and to consider the future of regional level evaluation. At this time the Joint Advisory Committee for CAPC in Ontario would like future regional evaluation to increase its focus on individual outcomes. Toward this end the Study Team received some extra funding to develop a proposal for how this type of evaluation could be undertaken with CAPC sites. At the conference, participants at our session on the future of regional evaluation worked together in small groups to identify individual outcome indicators for each of Ontario’s three CAPC priority areas (prevention of child abuse; improved parenting skills; and improved infant and child nutrition). We also received funding for expenses related to conducting nine case studies of CAPC projects during the Spring of 1998.

### **K-W Habilitation Services - Evaluation Review**

The final report of the Evaluation Review has been presented to the Board of Directors. The information gathering stage of the evaluation review provided the opportunity for all of the individuals, families, and individuals/families on the waiting list for services, to respond to a survey. A representative sample of staff and all management personnel was also included in the evaluation/review. The overall response rate was 61%. This represents an amazing level of involvement from a variety of stakeholders. The report to date has been well received and feedback sessions, to which all people who received a survey will be invited, are being planned for the near future.

### **Violence Against Women with Developmental Disabilities: Prevention and Education**

Since our goal in the “Violence against Women who have Developmental Challenges: Education and Prevention” Project is to develop practical, useful resources to prevent violence and abuse, we find ourselves continually turning to women who have developmental challenges and have experienced abuse to learn from them what would best meet their needs. The four women on our Advisory Committee bring rich knowledge and ideas based in their experiences.

The first step of this project was a needs assessment in which we talked with a variety of stakeholders, including women who have developmental challenges, to learn what resources are most needed to prevent violence and abuse of women with developmental challenges. We presented what we learned in a community forum in September 1997, where we invited feedback about areas of priority for resources. The top three priorities which emerged are: 1) education of women who have developmental challenges about abuse, their rights, and how to get support; 2) education of the general public to raise awareness of the issues of abuse of women with developmental challenges; and 3) education of professionals (i.e. health professionals, police, legal system, social service providers) about the issues of abuse against women who have developmental challenges and how to best support them. Participants in the needs assessment stressed the importance of involving consumers in the development of the resources in order to ensure that they are practical, and useful.

As we move into our second step in this project, we look forward to women who have developmental chal-



lenges taking more of a leadership role in the development and design of the resources.

**Dignity and Opportunity: Assessing the Economic Contribution of Foreign Trained Newcomers**

*Dignity and Opportunity: Assessing the Economic Contribution of Foreign Trained Newcomers* is a participatory action research project carried out in partnership with the Centre for Research and Skills for Change, an organization serving immigrants in Toronto.

The overall purpose of this project is to compare the economic *benefit* of successfully utilizing the skills of foreign-trained newcomers in the Ontario labour force with the *loss* if such skills are under-utilized. There are three phases to the project 1) development, 2) loss-benefit analysis, and 3) dissemination strategy. Presently the project has received funding to support the development phase of this research which began in October, 1997 and will continue until March 31, 1998.

In the development phase we will determine the indicators of economic benefits and losses associated with immigration. We will be doing this, in part, through an international literature review where we will see how other studies have measured the contribution of immigrants to their new home countries. Next we will test the relevance of these indicators to five professional and trade groups in Ontario. This was achieved by holding focus groups with foreign trained newcomers from the identified professional and trade groups, as well as by holding telephone interviews with licensing bodies, policy makers, and academics.

The economic indicators we identified in the development phase will then be used in the next phase of the

research project: a loss-benefit analysis. The purpose of this phase will be to compare the economic losses and benefits of foreign trained newcomers in Ontario who have obtained employment in their field with those who have not obtained employment. It is our intent that the research findings will present information to those in a position to address access barriers (i.e., policy makers, licensing bodies) in order to inform their decision-making.

The Disability of Language - Maintaining Barriers  
A poem by Don Roth

When we noticed people were different ...  
We called them evil And they were stoned  
We called them a threat And they were chained  
We called them idiots And we gave them pity  
  
And they were still in chains  
  
We called them handicapped And they were deficient  
We called them mental retardates And they were trained  
We called them clients And they begged for services  
  
A new chain  
  
We called them disabled Yet we were disabling  
We called them challenged And avoided our own  
We called them a label And said, "We have to call  
them something. Other  
-wise we won't know who  
we are talking about"  
And we were right We have to call them something  
  
We have to call them people, members of our community,  
sister and brother, mom and dad - friend  
We call "them" human - and **We are One**

**Centre Staff**

**Centre Researchers**

- Joanna Ochocka
- Andrew Taylor
- Mary McGeown
- Rich Janzen
- Janos Botschner
- Ilona Bodendorfer
- Michelle Poechman Fisher
- Barbara Zupko
- Sylvia Cornell
- Barry D'Costa
- Paul Reeve

**Board Members**

**Administrative Support**

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- Danuta Lubicka

- Maria DeBoer
- D'Arcy Farlow
- Theron Kramer
- Heather Maclean
- Geoff Nelson
- Alison Pedlar
- Marnie Shepherd
- Joyce Stormont



*Centre for Research & Education in Human Services*  
*26 College Street*  
*Kitchener, Ontario N2H 4Z9*

