



Left to Right: Dewlyn Lobo, Minister Carla Qualtrough, Kory Earle, Shelley Fletcher, and Louise Bourgeois

The Updater

March 2019

PEOPLE
FIRST
OF CANADA



PERSONNES
D'ABORD
DU CANADA

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL DAY 2018 IN OTTAWA

A Message from the President

It was great to have the whole PFC board in Ottawa to celebrate International Day in December 2018, as well as for our meetings. There was a lot going on over the three days. There were several celebrations and there was a lot of new information coming out of our board meetings.

Many of our members enjoyed the reception for International Day (as you can see from the picture above!). And it was a pleasure to attend the Canadian Association for Community Living's 60th anniversary and to bring greetings to our partners on this great occasion. The tribute to the Task Force and The Freedom Tour was another wonderful celebration with a great turnout.

As for the new information, it is obvious that People First of Canada is growing and changing! We have added a new staff. We have changed from a provincial and territorial outlook to a regional one. We have started a new project around sheltered workshops. We are exploring options around a social enterprise.

And I am pleased to announce that we have received funding for the next three years. Thank you to the government who values our work, and to our staff for preparing and submitting the proposal.

We are also going to be making a new strategic plan to help us move forward and keep growing as an organization and as a movement. A strategic plan also helps us all keep track of what we are doing and where we want to make changes.

I am looking forward to making this plan with all of you and hearing your thoughts on our future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind all of our members to get out and vote! We have a federal election coming up soon in our country and it is our opportunity to get our voices heard and make our choices on our leaders. There have been many changes made to make voting more accessible for people with disabilities in federal elections.

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Celebrating The Freedom Tour

The 10th anniversary of *The Freedom Tour* was celebrated in Ottawa on December 2, 2018. About 100 people from the national disability community and from government came together to mark the occasion at a reception.

Original Freedom Tour members David Weremy and Kevin Johnson attended the event, along with the director, Josée Boulanger, and crew member Christine Currie. There were a few other members who were involved in the film in attendance, including John Cox and Shane Haddad. Peter Bourne provided musical entertainment for the event.

A short video, called 'The Freedom Tour: 10 Years Down The Road', was shown. The video looks back at the impact and reach of the documentary over the past ten years. The film has definitely raised awareness and made a difference when it comes to being an educational tool.



Many communities groups use it in training support workers, and many universities and colleges across Canada have included the film in social work and justice courses. It was also obvious that the film has had a deep effect on people with intellectual disabilities and being able to speak out about their experiences in institutions in Canada.

In honour of the 10th anniversary of *The Freedom Tour*, People First of Canada has released the entire film online for

the first time. It can be accessed through the [PFC YouTube page](#).

PETER BOURNE ENTERTAINING

Pictured above is Peter Bourne providing entertainment at the celebration of *The Freedom Tour* anniversary and the work of the Task Force on Deinstitutionalization



Pictured above is David Weremy, the representative plaintiff in the Manitoba Developmental Centre Class Action

Manitoba Developmental Centre Class Action

David Weremy is the representative plaintiff in the Manitoba Developmental Centre class action. David is a long-time member of People First and was one of the directors and original members of *The Freedom Tour* documentary. He has also been involved with the Joint Task Force on Deinstitutionalization for the past several years.

With the help of the law firm Koskie Minsky, and lawyer David Rosenfeld, the lawsuit was filed in October 2018. David's sworn statement of his experiences at MDC was filed in December 2018 and there were several

news articles about the lawsuit in the national media.

The Manitoba Government filed its response to the suit in January 2019 and said that none of the abuse or neglect happened. David was disappointed but "not surprised."

But the lawsuit is moving forward, and there have been three more former residents who have also filed sworn statements about their similar experiences while they were at MDC.

David says he's "not going to quit fighting."

9TH ANNUAL POLICY FORUM



Living in the community

Chris Rowley spoke about living in the community and having choice in housing.



Poverty and people with intellectual disabilities

John Cox spoke about poverty and the lack of basic resources for people with intellectual disabilities.

FAST FACTS

73%

of working age adults with intellectual disabilities who live on their own are living in poverty

25.5%

of working age people with intellectual disabilities have any paid employment (the national average is 75.5%)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Check out our website at www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca



Donna Brown (left) presented the customer service panel at the policy forum. Catherine Rodgers (right) pushed the PowerPoint button!

9th Annual Policy Forum Panels

The Policy Forum is an annual event co-hosted by People First of Canada and the Canadian Association for Community living (CACL), in collaboration with the Office for Disability Issues. It is held in early December in Ottawa. This year's theme was **Inclusion: What gets measured gets done.**

The Policy Forum is our opportunity to bring the issues of people labelled with an intellectual disability to the forefront. PFC president, Kory Earle, and CACL president, Joy Bacon, were the co-hosts. Minister of Public Services and Procurement and Accessibility, Carla Qualtrough, brought greetings to begin the forum. Director General for ODI, James Van Raalte, spoke during the accessibility panel.

There was a People First member on each panel. They brought their own personal experiences and the messages of People First of Canada to the forum.

The first panel of the day was about defining inclusion. Dewlyn Lobo spoke about her life experiences and being included (or not) in school, at work, and in her social life. The second panel was about housing. Chris Rowley spoke about his current living situation and about having choice in housing and support. The third panel was about poverty reduction. John Cox spoke about what real poverty looks like for a

person with a disability in his province of Nova Scotia. The fourth panel was about accessibility. Donna Brown delivered the PFC Core Values tool on how to provide appropriate customer service to people with intellectual disabilities.

The forum was very well attended with the largest number of attendees we have ever had. Many people commented on how



Dewlyn Lobo presented on the panel about being included

important it was to hear the real life experiences of people with intellectual disabilities, along with the more educational material at the forum.

Closing remarks on the forum were made by PFC executive director Shelley Fletcher, and CACL executive vice-president, Krista Carr.

Although the forum itself was successful, there is still a great need for more work to be done to advance the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in our country.

Volunteer Appreciation - Thank YOU!

People First of Canada members and advisors are all volunteers. They give their time and effort, and they bring their experiences and skills to the movement. Each People First chapter has its own advisor.

National Volunteer Week is a time to give our heartfelt thanks to all our volunteer members and advisors across the country. As we have said before – we couldn't do it without you. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to the People First movement!

We also want to thank our four national advisors. Sylvain Bergeron is our Eastern Advisor as well as being our by-law and resolution advisor. Christine Currie is our

Western Advisor. Janet Forbes is our national office advisor. And Lisa Rawlins-Bird is our Northern Advisor as well as providing support at national board meetings.



Three of our National Advisors, left to right: Lisa Rawlins-Bird, Sylvain Bergeron, and Christine Currie

Our national advisors are very committed, knowledgeable and fun people. They have been involved in

many of PFC's projects over the years.

They have travelled all over the country to give support to our members and help our meetings to run smoothly. Sylvain and Janet have been advisors for over twenty years! Both Lisa and Christine have each been an advisor for at least ten years.

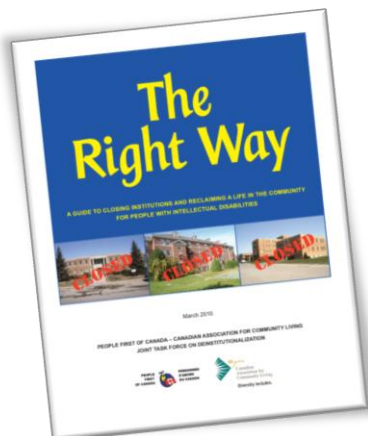
If you add it up, these four dedicated advisors have given close to 60 years of service to the People First movement!

Thank you Lisa, Christine, Janet, and Sylvain for your time, effort and your continued commitment to People First!

Task Force on Deinstitutionalization

Many members of the Joint Task Force on Deinstitutionalization were in Ottawa and attended the celebration event of *The Freedom Tour* and the work of the Task Force. A short presentation was shown with some of the highlights of the accomplishments of the Task Force over the past 16 years.

This included *The Right Way* guide to closing in institutions – a great resource.



It also included the Task Force definition of an institution being adopted by other countries as they work to close institutions. The Task Force defines an institution in the following way.

'An institution is any place where people labelled with an intellectual disability are isolated, segregated, and/or congregated. An institution is any place where people do not have control over their lives and day to day decisions. An institution is not defined merely by its size.'

The Task Force also received the Pat Worth Award for inclusion for their work to close institutions in this country.



THE TASK FORCE ON DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION RECEIVES THE PAT WORTH AWARD

Pictured above, left to right: David Weremy, Chris Currie, Shane Haddad, Fred Ford, Peter Bourne, Norm Mcleod, Don Gallant, Janet Forbes, Roy Skoreyko, and Shelley Fletcher

Updates and Information

My Home My Community Project

Over the winter, the My Home My Community project did focus groups on housing. People First of Canada was very involved in this part of the process and held seven focus groups in five provinces and one territory. There were 43 of our members who took part in the focus groups and shared their information, experiences and opinions on their housing situation and their current options.

The next phase of the project will be case studies and will involve looking closer at some people's living arrangements and why they work or do not work.

Plain Language Field Testers

Two of our members, Gordon Fletcher and Heidi Mallett, were involved in the latest plain language translation as field testers. Each worked with our Director of Communications, Catherine Rodgers, and provided some valuable feedback on the document. They also said it was a great learning experience!

Nova Scotia Human Rights Hearings

The decision of the recent human rights hearings in Nova Scotia found that the province discriminated against three people who were institutionalized for long periods of time due to lack of housing. But, it did not find discrimination against the 1500 people with disabilities who are still on a waitlist or are being housed inappropriately.

The Disability Rights Coalition in Nova Scotia is appealing that part of the decision. People First NS is part of the coalition and PFC may be involved in the appeal.

Accessible Canada Act

PFC continues to be involved in the Accessible Canada Act and has been attending teleconferences about the regulations (or rules) that will be coming if the Act is fully passed. We are also attending teleconferences about the reporting requirements that will be part of the Act.

The Act was recently referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to begin study.

Help Wanted – Sheltered Workshop Project

PFC has begun another exciting project. This one is about doing research into sheltered workshops in our country. We want to increase public awareness about sheltered workshops. We also want to explore solutions to end sheltered workshops and make sure that people with intellectual disabilities can be employed in the community and be paid equally.

The first phase of this three-year project has already begun. Monica Schroeder will be working with regional groups as the project progresses.

PFC Strategic Planning

Over the next few months, PFC is going to be developing a strategic plan to help us keep track and move forward with our goals over the next three years.

Chapters have already been doing work and gathering information to bring to the next board meeting. Jason Newberry is going to lead us through the process of making our plan. There will also be more opportunities for our regional groups to provide input after this initial planning session.

PFC AT WORK



The 'R' Word

Pictured above, Richard Ruston (right) and Kory Earle (left), give a presentation on how people with intellectual disabilities will never accept the 'r-word'.



President's Award 2018

Pictured above is Kory Earle presenting the PFC 2018 President's Award to our awesome support person Crystal Molinski – congratulations Crystal on a well-deserved award!



Empower Us Session

Pictured above, Mel Good (left), PEI People First advisor, Herb Franklin (centre), PF Alberta member, and Andrea Harrison (right) PFC Aboriginal Representative and 2nd Vice President, doing small group work during the Empower Us session in December 2018.

Meeting with Members of Parliament

Before the meetings in Ottawa in December 2018, PFC's newest staff member, Monica Schroeder, was busy working with members across the country to help set up meetings with their Members of Parliament (MP).

Monica also developed speaking notes to help members during their meetings. The purpose of meeting with MPs was to let them know what changes People First of Canada would like to see in the proposed Accessible Canada Act.

These changes included seeing disability supports in the Act, along with a commitment to provide information in plain language so it is accessible to our members.

PFC also wants to make sure that people with intellectual disabilities are included in decision making processes around the Act. And that they are represented on the boards of any new organizations that are created by the Act.

With everybody working together, in total, PFC members had more than 14 meetings arranged with their MPs!

This was a great outcome and really shows how much we can do when we all work together.

There were also some meetings in local offices when it couldn't be arranged for Ottawa.

Many members spoke of how great an experience it was to go to their MPs offices and speak directly with them. The MPs were interested in the feedback from PF members on the Act.

It was a great way to show our MPs how we believe in 'Nothing About Us Without Us'!



Front row left to right: Kevin Johnson, President of PF Manitoba with advisor Chris Currie; Back row left to right: ?? and Terry Duguid

The Updater Newsletter

People First of Canada
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People First of Canada is the national voice for people who have been labelled with an intellectual disability.

We are a national non-profit organization for men and women with an intellectual disability supporting each other to reclaim our right to be recognized as full citizens. We do this through peer support, sharing our personal stories, developing leadership skills, advocating for our right to choose where and with whom we live, and by ensuring that our voices are heard and respected. We work together to educate and influence communities and government to ensure that all persons with intellectual disabilities are fully included and supported to live as equal citizens in Canada.

We promote rights – human rights, citizenship rights, accommodations rights and language rights. We fight for the rights to freedom, choice and equality for all citizens. The vision for People First is of a movement of people who want all citizens to live equally in the community.

Find out more at www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca

Contact us at info@peoplefirstofcanada.ca

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