

Was Your Sibling Institutionalized for a Developmental Disability?

Connect with other brothers and sisters who share this experience

In 2009, the last three Ontario institutions for people labelled with developmental disabilities – the Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres – closed. Soon after, survivors launched class action lawsuits alleging systemic abuse and neglect. The suits were eventually settled, and survivors received some compensation for harm done to them. But the far-reaching impacts of institutionalization are still being felt by survivors, their families, and our communities, and institutionalization continues in other forms and in other jurisdictions.

Through the class actions, siblings of those who were institutionalized started to connect and discover that we have much to share and learn from each other. While our sisters and brothers suffered the worst injustices and harms, our families suffered too, in numerous and often unrecognized ways. As siblings, we may not have had anyone to talk to about what was happening in our families at the time of institutionalization; we may know little about what happened to our siblings. Some of us may have not thought there was anything to talk about as our family or community saw institutionalization as the “best thing to do.” For these and other reasons, our stories may have remained untold for decades. Yet sharing our stories can be healing and can add another dimension to society’s understanding of the consequences of this flawed model of care. At the same time, we recognize there is a diversity of experience and there are positive stories to be told as well.

Join Victoria Freeman and Vici Clarke for an opportunity to meet other siblings, listen to their stories, and perhaps share your own. Victoria Freeman is the author of *A World without Martha: A Memoir of Sisters, Disability, and Difference* and Vici Clarke is the Litigation Guardian for the Rideau Regional Centre class action. Our siblings were both institutionalized at Rideau. We know it is often hard to share difficult stories, but we have found it empowering to connect with others who have similar life experience.

This virtual meeting is sponsored by the Uncovering the People’s History Project of Family Alliance Ontario, which is helping survivors and others share their stories of the impact of the institutions on the people who lived in them, their families, and their communities. We invite siblings of anyone who lived at any institution for people with developmental disabilities, in Ontario or beyond, to join this discussion. We will create an informal, safe, supportive, and respectful environment for discussion: a skilled person who has a deep understanding of the issues and experience in assisting survivors and their families will join us to provide support, as needed. We can also direct you to other resources that might be helpful in contextualizing sibling experiences. Come and join us ... to speak or just to listen. We look forward to connecting with you.

Tuesday December 1, 7– 9pm (online via Zoom)

For more information, contact Vici Clarke: vclarke@ca.inter.net or (905)723-8111

Click Here to Register

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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