

JOSHUA'S TREE: A PROPOSAL



Written by
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Joshua's Tree: A Proposal

There is a firestorm of heated discussions happening in Canada and around the world about how to provide services to the mentally ill. Fierlbeck (2011) put forward:

While the debate over what mental health is shifts as frequently as the debate over how to treat it, the fact that it plays an increasingly prominent role in health care expenditure alone means that policy makers will be forced to grapple with the way in which it is provided. The larger social issues surrounding the meaning of citizenship and inclusion will also manifest themselves into political pressure to which officials will have to respond. (pp. 196-197)

Psychosis is a health phenomenon that includes complex ethical, legal, social justice, human rights, economic, and medical components. If a transformative shift occurs in our treatment and service delivery approach to psychotic illness, there will be positive iterations felt throughout the entire mental health system.

According to current knowledge and scientific research, we are manufacturing mental patients at a rate greater than at any other time in history. Many learned scholars have done research over the last few decades to discover why and what the solution is. I made a commitment to review the literature and connect with individuals who have done the deep dive into the area of psychosis recovery: the pioneers and innovators. On my journey thus far, I have uncovered a significant body of knowledge. It clearly outlines where we, as a society and a health care industry, are going wrong and, most importantly, begins to reveal some solutions. For the first time in almost four decades, I am excited and hopeful about the future of people who experience psychotic illness.

Black print on white paper is not the most effective or interesting way to make knowledge or perspectives available, but I have enclosed a brief background document. Face-to-face interactive and dynamic dialogue between people creates a much richer, deeper, more meaningful learning experience as we seek a way forward. I propose that the participants identified in Appendix A come together in Saskatchewan with politicians, policy makers, and healthcare leaders. A small investment of money and time may prevent Saskatchewan from



making a costly mistake as they move forward in their strategic planning. Positive and/or potential positive outcomes of a gathering in Saskatchewan are:

- 1) Generate international good will with key social power players in the national and international mental health landscape.
- 2) Expand leadership's knowledge and perspective prior to making difficult decisions.
- 3) Utilize the expanded body of knowledge and international connections to position Saskatchewan as a world leader in the area of psychosis recovery methodology and service delivery.

Premier Brad Wall is believed by his constituents to be a sophisticated visionary capable of making bold, controversial moves. There are increasingly powerful grassroots movements pushing for revolutionary change on the mental health landscape. The choices made today will determine what is written in the history books tomorrow.

Ralph (2000) wrote,

A major development has been the interest policy makers have expressed in the concept of recovery and the various ways this is implemented. Can this interest—and the collaboration of consumers, providers and policymakers—result in a paradigm shift in the mental health system that actually encourages and supports recovery? Let us hope so. (p. 5)

I believe Saskatchewan can become a leader nationally and internationally. We can create place where we can sit at the table with the right configuration of people to engage in a transparent and authentic dialogue as we grapple with solving one of the toughest social, ethical, legal, medical, and financial issues of our time: innovation in psychosis recovery.



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References

Fierlbeck, K. (2011). *Health care in Canada: A citizen's guide to policy and politics*. Toronto, ON, Canada: University of Toronto Press

Ralph, R. (2000). *Review of recovery literature: A synthesis of a sample of recovery literature*. Retrieved from http://www.nasmhpd.org/general_files/publications/ntac_pubs/reports/ralphrecovweb.pdf



Appendix A: Key Think Tank Participants

Pia Barnes

Pia Barnes, RN, BN, is a recipient of mental health services, a family member, and a mental health nurse clinician. Pia has worked for decades to assist individuals and families navigate mental illness and the mental health services system. In 1994, Pia was the Coordinator of Consumer Initiatives for the Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta South Central Region. Pia also formed a self-help group called the *High Flyer's Club* and received the "Courage to Reach Beyond" award by the Canadian Mental Health Nurses Federation. In 1998, Pia was co-founder of Brainstorm Fundamentals Inc., a mental illness recovery company and independent nursing practice. In 2001, Pia advanced her academic knowledge and expanded her experience by teaching nursing students in acute care psychiatric settings. She is currently an Operational Stress Injury Clinic Nurse Clinician in Calgary, AB. The clinic is a specialized mental health service for veterans and current serving members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP and their families who are experiencing psychological difficulties as a result of service-related stress and traumatic events.



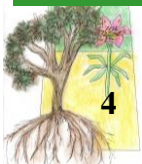
Wendy Dixon

Wendy Dixon RN, MA, is a recipient of mental health services and a family member. She is a healthcare leader with a lifetime of academic and experiential knowledge managing psychosis in home, community, hospital, and the criminal justice system. She is a past board member of the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan and the Schizophrenia Society of Canada.

From 1994-1998 Wendy was the Coordinator of Community Development for the Canadian Mental Health Association in Calgary, Alberta, and in 1998, co-founded Brainstorm Fundamentals Inc. – a mental illness recovery company. Wendy is a past board member of the National Network of Mental Health, a consumer/survivor organization.



From 2005 to 2010, Wendy was the Unit Manager of a Neurological Rehabilitation Unit in the Calgary Health Region. She concurrently received her Master's Degree in Leadership Health Specialty from Royal Roads University in 2009. In 2010, she returned to her home province of Saskatchewan and is currently the Facility Manager of Golden Prairie Nursing Home in Indian Head, Saskatchewan. She is the founder of the Joshua Tree Project: the search for innovation in psychosis recovery.



James B. (Jim) Gottstein

Jim Gottstein grew up in Anchorage, Alaska, and is a recipient of mental health services. After graduating from West Anchorage High School in 1971, he attended the University of Oregon and graduated with honors (BS, Finance) in 1974. From there, he attended Harvard Law School graduating in 1978 with a J.D. degree. Mr. Gottstein's career has evolved from emphasizing business matters and public land law, with mental health representation and advocacy as an adjunct, to increasing emphasis on mental health advocacy and representation.



Since late 2002, Mr. Gottstein has devoted the bulk of his time *pro bono* to the Law Project for Psychiatric Rights (PsychRights), whose mission is to mount a strategic litigation campaign against forced psychiatric drugging and electroshock across the United States. In June of 2006, the Alaska Supreme Court decided *Myers v. Alaska Psychiatric Institute*, which ruled Alaska's forced drugging procedures unconstitutional. *Myers* has been called “the most important State Supreme Court decision” on forced drugging in 20 years.

Mr. Gottstein is most known around the US and internationally for subpoenaing and releasing the Zyprexa Papers in late 2006, resulting in a series of *New York Times* articles and an editorial calling for a Congressional investigation. In January of 2009, Eli Lilly pled guilty and agreed to pay \$1.4 billion in civil and criminal fines for the activities revealed by the Zyprexa Papers.

Mr. Gottstein has also devoted considerable time trying to make alternatives to psychiatric drugs available in Alaska through Soteria-Alaska, and CHOICES, Inc. See, *Report on Multi-Faceted Grass-Roots Efforts to Bring about Meaningful Change to Alaska's Mental Health Program* for a description of these efforts.

Kevin Healey

Kevin Healey... is a survivor—mostly of his own missteps, mistakes, and misdeeds, but also of a life of never quite fitting in: anywhere. Having collected a slew of diagnoses from health systems in two countries and two continents, he realized none made more than partial sense, gave up on the passive patient role, and became the chief activist in his own recovery. Kevin has engaged in peer work: recovery as learning and [re]connecting. He believes that everyone is in recovery, including or especially workers and organizations in mental health; that not just those deemed ill, but we all benefit from the kind emancipation that comes from reconnecting with our humanity and interconnectedness; and that we need to integrate the best ideas from all disciplines, not just the one we might be trained in.

He draws on three decades of experience working with groups, building learning programs, and establishing communities of learning to help people connect, learn, and support each other in making the changes they think important. Kevin is the founder and coordinator of Recovery Network: Toronto and is now connecting with readers around the globe who appreciate an online resource that takes a broad, global perspective on recovery, helps them find resources, make sense of their own situation, and take the lead in their own recovery.

For three decades and more, Kevin hears voices that you don't. Sometimes a troubling experience, often rewarding, but always challenging and tiring, hard work, and learning from others has led to accepting and understanding his voices and what they mean: taming and training the voices and turning the experience into a useful, even valuable one. He is now working to establish groups and

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programs in the Toronto area and connecting with others across Canada in his role as contact for Intervoice and the global hearing voices community.

Virgil Stucker

Virgil Stucker, founding Chairman and President of the Foundation for Excellence in Mental Health Care and current and founding Executive Director and President of CooperRiis Healing Community, has integrated his life with therapeutic communities since 1975 when he first started at Gould Farm: America's oldest therapeutic community for individuals recovering from mental illness. Gould Farm, founded in 1913 in Massachusetts, is one of the models CooperRiis has followed.



Virgil felt destined to help create therapeutic communities; after 14 years at Gould Farm, he was the founding Executive Director of Rose Hill in Michigan, which opened in 1992, and of Gateway Homes of Richmond, Virginia, which opened in 1986. In 1978, he was the founding Program Director of Gould Farm's Boston Program.

Virgil also took some "sabbaticals" (as he puts it) from the life of therapeutic community, each of which further explored his interest in community and the power of relationships. In Massachusetts, he is past founding president of the REACH Community Health Foundation, Vice President of Planning and Development for Northern Berkshire Health Systems, President of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Senior Vice President of Legacy Banks, a community banking system, and Adjunct Professor of Philanthropy for the Visionaries Institute of Suffolk University. His degrees include an MBA with a focus on non-profit creation and management and a BA in philosophy.

Chris Summerville

As a family member and a recipient of mental health services, Chris has been the executive director of the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society since 1995 and is also the CEO of the Schizophrenia Society of Canada. In 2007, Prime Minister Harper appointed Chris to the Board of Directors of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. As a provincial and national leader and advocate for a transformed, recovery-oriented mental health system, he has served on numerous provincial and national boards, including: the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, The National Network for Mental Health, Psychosocial Rehabilitation Canada, the Canadian Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health, and the South Eastman Regional Health Authority. Chris is committed to addressing the social prejudice and accompanying discrimination associated with mental illness. He is a Certified Psychosocial Rehabilitation Practitioner (CPRP) and also certified with Living Works as an ASIST Suicide Intervention Master Trainer.



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Robert Whitaker

Robert Whitaker is a journalist and author of four books. Much of his writing has focused on psychiatry, the pharmaceutical industry, and medical histories. His first book, *Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine and the Enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill*, was named by *Discover* magazine as one of the best science books of 2002. His newest book, *Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America*, won the Investigative Reporters and Editors book award for best investigative journalism in 2010.



Prior to writing books, Robert Whitaker worked as the science and medical reporter at the *Albany Times Union* newspaper in New York for a number of years. His journalism articles won several national awards, including a George Polk award for medical writing and a National Association of Science Writers' award for best magazine article. A series he co-wrote for *The Boston Globe* was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1998.



