

BRAIN WAVES

Volume 5 Issue 1

A Consumer Initiative Fund Newsletter

Spring 2002



From the desk of Janet [REDACTED]

I succeeded Judy [REDACTED] August 2001 and enjoy the work immensely (yes, even the paperwork). I have met a wide array of personalities and tasks and can hardly imagine becoming bored. This is a good thing!

Previous to this position with CIF, I worked with Jill [REDACTED] in the Consumer Support office, helping her with the Peer Support Program. This provided me with some working knowledge of the VCMHS office at the V/RHB. It also meant that, when I interviewed for this position, I really wanted it. The office here is a very rewarding place to be.

I grew up in Vancouver and received a BA and a Special Education degree from UBC before going to live in Montreal. There I took an Honours Equivalency in Psychology

at Concordia University, did research work in Human Communications Disorders at McGill University and administered a private clinic for Behavior Therapy and Research. I spent a glorious 13 years in Montreal and was very upset when I had to move to Toronto because of my husband's business. However, I spent a good 20 years in this busy city, bringing up my kids and working in a variety of situations. I finally "retired" back to my hometown. Vancouver is still a more beautiful and a much quieter, friendlier, and overall, easier city to live in than Toronto -- believe me, even if you do get stuck in the occasional traffic jam and sometimes wonder whether the rain will ever stop!

I bring all of my past job skills to the "action" here. I also bring to the position my status as a "consumer". I have been a participant/survivor of mental health services for a long time and wish that there had been more of the positive attitudes and varieties of services THEN as there are now. However, as the old adage goes, "better late than never". I could add more adages such as "change takes a long time", "one step at a time", "every little bit helps" and they would all ring true. Let's keep mental health services and opportunities progressing. I am happy to be part of CIF as it stays on this forefront.

Janet [REDACTED]
Consumer Support Worker
CIF Committee
604-708-5252.



Support Group for Parents

By Virginia [REDACTED]

Hello! I am Virginia [REDACTED] a parent/
mental health

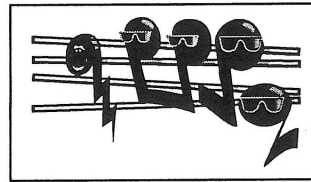
consumer and the project manager for The Support Group for Parents. This group started in June 2001, thanks to CIF support. Our members are mental health consumers who are actively parenting their child(ren). We are a diverse group of people who meet twice a month for support and information about parenting and coping with a mental illness.

We also go on recreational outings and recently visited Burnaby Heritage Village which was decorated for Christmas with Santa in his workshop. The biggest hit with both parents and children was the antique carousel which has been restored and which can be ridden. The parents and children who arrived really enjoyed themselves. Now we are looking forward to the New Year and are planning a spring outing.

If you are a parent and are interested in joining our group, please contact Janet [REDACTED] at 604-708-5252. The following are our guidelines for group membership.

- ❖ Members are actively parenting their children, either full-time or part-time (e.g. shared custody or temporarily lost custody due to a care agreement)
- ❖ Members are able to actively participate in a peer support discussion group relating to issues of parenting, while coping with a mental illness
- ❖ Members are able to attend the twice-monthly meetings on a regular basis
- ❖ Members have a support person or counsellor with whom they can discuss their personal issues

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Highs & Lows Choir

By Wendy [REDACTED] &
Dori [REDACTED]

The Highs & Lows Choir continues to grow in size (about 20 members) and quality. We had an intense performing season for Christmas. Our audiences love us: clapping, smiles, notes of appreciation. Peter [REDACTED], our liaison with CIF, said we had improved tremendously, with an interesting repertoire and tight harmonies.

The choir treasures working with our conductor, Earle [REDACTED]. He keeps us on our toes with music from many centuries and many countries. He also keeps us laughing with his quirky jokes and off-the-wall antics. Georgie [REDACTED] is our delightful pianist. We appreciate her flexibility, warmth, and friendship.

Many of us have been in the choir for several years, yet we are always eager to have new members (no audition necessary). Luckily we are becoming better known, partly thanks to a 6-minute CBC radio show report in December. Please consider joining us or attending one of our concerts. In particular, we are desperate for Bass singers! Please call?

madness 101
at the
humanities storefront

Mental Health Dialogue Series

Madness 101 was created in the summer of July 2001 and launched after the Mad Protest at the World Assembly of Mental Health in Vancouver. Madness 101 is a monthly event, and the speakers are authors/editors of critical psychiatric literature or others dedicated to intellectual engagement. Door prizes include new books, café latte for two, and movie passes.

In September 2001 the series moved from the psychiatric survivor gallery, Gallery Gachet, to the Humanities Storefront. With ties to the University of British Columbia, The Humanities Storefront is a resource centre in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. It offers lecture/discussion/films every night of the week and free access to on-line computers.

Madness 101 is one of the Storefront's most successful series. To join the distribution list and for more information: info@madness101.com

Project Manger is Millie [REDACTED]: You can call 604-255-0255 .

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2001-2002 Consumer Initiative Fund Projects

#1. Art Studios Bursary Fund - provides consumers with funds for personal art supplies and continuing education activities.

#3. Downtown South Arts Project - one consumer artist in residence and a consumer art assistant to provide art groups and materials at the Coast Drop-In Centre.

#9 Gallery Gachet - Provides funding for a variety of artistic endeavors through the Gallery at 88 East Cordova. Some of these events include monthly schedules of prose/poetry and performance, a workshop series on alternative healing and coping strategies and art therapy sessions.

#10 The Drive Pool Club - teaches pool to 8 or 9 socially isolated mental health consumers on a weekly basis.

#12 Physical Fitness and Nature Walk - To recover physical health by motivating other consumers to go on walks or do other physical activities every second week.

#13 – Leisure Exploration – a social recreational group for consumers to meet new friends while enjoying a physical activity i.e. swimming, hiking, ice-skating, bowling.

#14. Chinese Bursary Fund - provides grants for Chinese clients to pursue educational opportunities.

#15. Kid's Toy Trade - provides recycled toys to families living in the East Vancouver area.

#18. Highs and Lows Choir - ensures the successful running of the Highs and Lows Choir.

#20. Community Kitchen – Goal of educating the participants in preparing healthy economical meals, helping people with social interaction and cooperation.

#22. Job Training at MPA – Appropriate job training program at a recognized community college for 6 MPA members.

#23. Consumer Activities – opportunity for consumers to access events and resources such as movie theatre, tennis, golf, games and fitness training.

#24a. Crisis Fund – A \$40 crisis grant to people who are in crisis. *Referrals from a professional.*

24b Education Fund – The aim of this project is to help consumers achieve greater skills and self actualization by providing funds for them to take educational courses and leisure classes of their choice offered in their community.

#25. Madness, Masks & Miracles –A candid look at mental illness through performance, storytelling and music.

#27. Beginner's/Intermediate Quilting Class – By the end of the 10 week course, students will know how to do piece quilting and will have completed their project.

#28 Madness 101 - This is an educational series that examines alternative mental health literature. It is designed for mental health consumers to gain critical reading skills, intellectual stimulation and political analytical skills. Monthly meetings happen at the Humanities Storefront on Cordova and feature different writers and speakers.

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#29 Birds of a Feather – This group of 5 – 20 women gathers twice a month to socialize and have a free lunch. It is aimed at improving the coping skills of members by encouraging assumption of authority and responsibility in decision making by consensus. Along with developing a core group of 10-12 active and consistently regular participants, there is a recruitment component such that a contact list of 50 persons will be developed by the end of the year.

#30 Grooming – This project provides free haircuts to the members of Coast Resource Center.

#31 Support Group for Parents - This project provides a twice monthly opportunity to socialize and experience peer support, to decrease isolation and develop ongoing support networks and recreational opportunities for parents and their children.

#32 Evergreen Project - This project meets twice a month to deliver secondary mental health support services to all consumer/survivors in the Evergreen Health District. It provides information and education to the Neighbourhood House and to the community in general.

** Numbers reflect administrative purposes and are not necessarily sequential.*

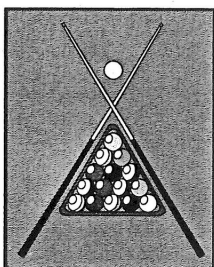


Photo names: R. to L.: Gene (Assistant), Rod, Priscilla, Nuvaru, Rod (seated), Berta (Project Manager), Jose, Helen, Arden

Downtown South Art Project

By Berta [REDACTED], Project Manager

All are welcomed to our Art classes at the Coast Resource Centre. Everyone has the ability to be an artist so join us in the creativity process daily at the Centre from 9:00 – 11:00 AM. **For more information, call 604-683-3787.**



The Drive Pool Club by Maureen [REDACTED] Project Manager

The Drive Pool Club was formed in 1997 through the CIF. The Club serves 6-9 consumers.

The group now meets

once a week (it was only twice monthly but we have expanded) at a pool hall on Commercial Drive. They learn to play pool and there is a social component to the group. The group is comprised of men and women. After pool, we enjoy a snack together.

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CIF Project #33 The Evergreen Project - Community Mental Health Support Group Program

by Emmett [REDACTED], Project Manager

The Evergreen Project is a community centre based mental health support and information group for people in the local neighbourhoods. Many people in the local districts are poorly informed of their options in the event of a serious psychological crisis; many people working at community centres have no idea how to cope with or who to call when faced with someone in a mentally distressed state. Many others are on EI, or CPP, or support themselves independently. They are not as well served by the Mental Health Services as are provincial disability recipients and are also deserving of help. Because of the CIF monies, the Kiwassa Mental Health Support group has been able to expand to 4 meetings per month, including starting a successful men's group. We are currently moving our gender-specific groups to a new location in the community. In February, we are starting Evergreen Group #2 at the Evergreen District Office at Collingwood. I would like to personally thank the committee for its support and my fellow project managers for their assistance.

Walls and Bridges

In the world of mental health, we have been very busy tearing down walls. The walls between the hospital and community, the walls of the professionals' office, the walls of consumer only housing, the walls of the sheltered workshop, the walls of ignorance, fear and old prejudices are all being disassembled.

Most of us agree that the walls had to come down do we could all work together and achieve the best quality of life for consumers, but not all of us cheer when they are swept away. After all, we are used to our walls. There were reasons for building them. We knew what to expect within our walls and we told ourselves that we needed the protection they provided.

And what do we do with the material left behind?

They tell us that now we must build bridges, but some of the material is not suitable, some of it must be thrown away.

Walls are built from fear, ignorance anger and the need for personal power, old fashioned and outdated knowledge, revenge and bitterness. We cannot use any of these things to build bridges.

To build bridges we have to replace ignorance with knowledge, fear with understanding and anger with reconciliation. The need to control or fix other people must be replaced with acceptance, the need for personal power with respect, revenge and bitterness with acceptance that the past cannot be changes but the future can be made better. Remember you are only a victim if where you are is where you plan to stay.

Building bridges is much harder than building walls. It takes real courage whether you are a consumer or a psychiatrist, a mental health professional or family member. No one can build a bridge alone. We each have to start from where we are, with the materials and skills we have, and begin a span that will eventually meet the span being built by someone else.

However, when the bridges are built, we will all be able to walk them with dignity and freedom and we will walk a little taller knowing what we have done.

Reprinted from Sharon [REDACTED]'s Workshop on *Revitalizing Regional Mental Health Advisory Committees, 1999.*



L-R: Richard, Tom, Susan, Norm, Ernie, Martin, Antonio, Mike.

DENMAN ISLAND CAMPING TRIP

By Olga [REDACTED], Project Manager

In early August the Community Kitchen held an orientation lunch in order to deal with appropriate papers for consent and insurance purposes, and trip planning. Thanks to this careful preparation our two vans were fully packed the night before our big adventure. We met at Coast Clubhouse on the morning of September 3; it was gray and rainy and I was dressed for winter, wearing several layers of winter clothes, including winter boots. After a cup of coffee

and a Danish with the group we were on our way.

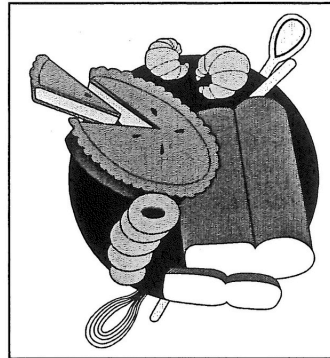
Once in Tsawwassen, it was beautiful; clear sky, sunny and warm – boy, did I look silly dressed in winter gear. I found a phone booth and soon reappeared with several layers of clothes in my arms. Our ferry time from Tsawwassen was just under two hours and while on the ferry we enjoyed gourmet sandwiches with fruit we had prepared for our trip. Along the route to the Penman Island ferry we spent an hour at Qualicum beach, enjoying the exhilarating view. The site of Denman Island was chosen because of its reputation for laid back ways, extensive green forest foliage and the fact that it is only a five minute ferry ride to Tribune Bay Provincial Park on Hornby Island. Tribune Bay boasts some of the warmest swimming water in B.C. and one of the finest white sandy beaches. We spent an afternoon here and some of us (the brave or stupid, depending on how you look at it) went swimming. It was freezing!!

The accommodations on Denman Island were first rate. The Elkhaven Lodge accommodated forty-five people and we were only ten in all so we had a lot of privacy to say the least. The lodge was fully equipped with mattresses, four full bathrooms, cafeteria style kitchen facilities complete with dishes, utensils, a large recreation/dining room, patio & barbecue area. Out back there was a stone fire pit with an enclosed seating area. The lodge was surrounded by 35 acres of lovely grass and trees and sported a volleyball net. The oyster beach was an easy hike on a downhill path five minutes from the lodge.

Over the course of the next five days we were either swimming, sunbathing, hiking, or playing games. We enjoyed wonderful meals of steak, salmon, Chicken Parmesan, Shish Kebobs, curried chicken, gourmet green salads, various cheeses, pancakes with fresh berries, lox and cream

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cheese, multiple snacks, and chocolate and butter pecan cake. Many of the members confessed they had not eaten better in years! All in all everyone had a wonderful and memorable time.



RECIPES

Maureen's recipe for Humus

1 or 2 cloves of garlic mashed
 ½ tsp. salt and ¼ tsp. pepper
 ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
 2 cups chickpeas, drained and rinsed (reserve fluid)
 ½ cup tahini (this is a sesame seed sauce and can be bought in a jar)
 1 tbsp. olive oil

Mash ingredients together, putting in as much of reserved fluid as is necessary to make a smooth paste. After mashing, blend with hand blender until smooth. Serve with pita, crackers, or vegetables – anything that can be dipped

1-2-3 Vegetable Chili

A delicious, satisfying recipe that the whole family will enjoy.
 Servings: 8

Ingredients:

1 (28 ounce) can tomatoes, undrained
 1 (16 ounce) jar TACO BELL HOME ORIGINALS Thick 'N Chunky Salsa
 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, rinsed, drained
 1 (10 ounce) package frozen whole kernel corn

1 cup halved zucchini slices
 1 teaspoon chili powder
 1 (8 ounce) package KRAFT 2% Milk Shredded Reduced Fat Mild Cheddar Cheese

1. Mix tomatoes, salsa, beans, corn, zucchini and chili powder in saucepan. Bring to boil on medium-high heat.
 2. Reduce heat to low; simmer 10 minutes.
 3. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons cheese onto bottom of each serving bowl; top with chili. Sprinkle each with additional 2 tablespoons cheese.

Beezie's Black Bean Soup

This soup has gained rave reviews from my non-veggie friends and family! It's bursting with healthy goodness, never mind that it tastes so wonderfully yummy! The soup loves to change, if you're cleaning out your refrigerator, be creative...

Servings: 10

Ingredients:

5 - 8 oz cans black beans
 1 carrot, chopped
 1 stalk celery, chopped
 1 large red onion, chopped
 6 cloves garlic, crushed
 2 green bell peppers, chopped
 2 jalapeno peppers, chopped
 1 8 oz. can lentils
 1 (28 ounce) can peeled and diced tomatoes
 2 tablespoons chili powder
 2 teaspoons ground cumin
 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 1 tablespoon salt
 1/2 cup uncooked white rice

Directions:

1. Put drained and rinsed black beans in a large pot. Stir in carrot, celery, onion, garlic, bell pepper, jalapeno, lentils and

tomatoes. Season with chili powder, cumin, oregano, black pepper, red wine vinegar and salt. Add 6 cups water.

Cook on medium heat for 15 minutes then turn down to low and cook for 45 minutes.

2. Stir the rice into the pot in the last 20 minutes of cooking.
3. Puree **half** the soup with a blender or food processor, then pour back into the pot before serving. If desired, add grated cheese, sour cream, chopped cilantro and break up a few tortilla chips on top as well! Enjoy!

Harvest Salad

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

Wash thoroughly:

1 bunch spinach, torn into bite-size pieces
 1 head of Romaine lettuce – same as above
 2 tomatoes, diced
 2 green onions, chopped
 6 radishes sliced thin
 2 hard-boiled eggs cut in half for decoration
 2 tablespoons vinegar
 1/3 cup light oil
 freshly ground black pepper to taste
 salt to taste

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, toss together the vegetables
2. In a small bowl, whisk together, vinegar, oil, pepper and salt. Taste, and adjust amounts to suit your liking. Pour over the salad and toss to coat. Carefully place hard-boiled eggs on top.