



Building Block News

Building on the L'Arche model in Newfoundland and Labrador

Cornerstone in the Community



Tales from L'Arche

Snapshot 2: Fiorella and Camila

By Sarah Parisio

Sarah Parisio has spent time at the Il Chico L'Arche community in Rome. Below is a small excerpt from her master's thesis titled "A New Model for Care: A Case Study in Creating Community among Persons With and Without Intellectual Disabilities". It is a snapshot of a relationship between a core member and assistant at L'Arche. This piece was written during her time spent at the community conducting research for her thesis.

Her choice: dark blue almost black. Fiorella, a verbal core member with a penchant for the 1985 motion picture classic Ladyhawke's handsome hero Captain Navarre – or Navarro as she likes to call him – has wanted to dye her hair for some time. Normally, she undertakes such activities in her workshop in the company of Noemi, an ex *maestra* of art and highly creative person. This time, however, Noemi is too busy for such an endeavour. Instead, Camila, an assistant from southern Italy who has been living with Fiorella for just over a year, becomes the hairdresser for the afternoon. While other house members relax in the living room, Camila and Fiorella set up a makeshift hair parlour in the larger of the main floor bathrooms. There, Camila massages the black gooey hair dye into Fiorella's sensitive scalp with gloved hands. Despite the low assistant to core member ratio, I am also encouraged to participate in Fiorella's hair dying adventure. Naturally, I run up to the third floor where my camera awaits me. Over the next hour, I snap beautiful smiles on both Fiorella and Camila's faces as these two women who otherwise have a tendency of preferring to spend time with others share this intimate moment together. Though color is a matter of taste, care is a matter of time. Today, Fiorella and Camila have won the jackpot.



Anton's inaugural road race: The 2016 ANE Mile

By Petra Sunner



On Sunday, May 29, 2016 Anton Buckley made his road running debut. Pushed in a racing chair formerly used in the Boston Marathon by John Grant and Keith Butler, Anton braved frigid temperatures to run from his house to Quidi Vidi Lake to participate in the ANE Mile race with more than 100 other competitors. Susan Flanagan, a CHS member and Anton's friend, pushed him down and through the mile while Anton's father, David Buckley pushed him back home. Anton seemed to really enjoy being in the chair as long as he was moving. It was an honour for Susan to be part of Anton's first race.

Inclusion Summit Report

By Sarah McMeekin

Inclusive Communities Summit



Sharing Experiences & Exploring Opportunities

Earlier this year, Lorraine Angelopoulos and I had the opportunity to represent Cornerstone Housing Society (CHS) at the Inclusive Communities Summit which was held here in St. John's. The event was hosted by Empower, the Disability Resource Centre

(formerly The Independent Living Resource Centre). It was exciting to see a room full of politicians, from all levels of government, and the media passionate about making business, living, and working conditions accessible to all.

The Panel Session – Creating Inclusive Neighbourhoods focused on how there are many agencies but little communication between them. The suggestion was made that there needs to be greater communication amongst the agencies. This will help to ensure that there can be overlap between services, creating better services and combatting the challenges of not having enough funding or volunteer hours.

I regard CHS as already working towards this goal as we introduce ourselves to many different agencies, letting them know who we are and what we are doing and by doing so, we also have the opportunity to find out more about them.

The panel also focused on how inclusion starts young in the classroom. Teaching strategies and their delivery need to be adaptable to the learner and change over time. Thinking outside the box, especially for recreational activities, can be difficult but very rewarding. As people spend time together the inclusion will come naturally. 'Play together, Stay together', an excellent resource for ideas would be to connect with the Inclusion Specialist at Recreation NL.

Going forward with this same idea, the Panel Session: Employment Challenges and Opportunities discussed that, to see real inclusion, we need to see persons with disabilities at all levels of employment. However, attitudes are hard to change even if the logistics are easy. The plea was made that supports need to be continual through their life from school to work with fewer barriers due to a changes in funding.

Furthermore, the Panel Session: The Built Environment – Moving Beyond the Minimums, discussed that the minimum is not enough. Building codes can be interpreted in many ways by the architect, builder and whoever else may be involved. All the panel speakers agreed that the United States have better codes but this is probably due to the fact that Americans are more inclined to sue, and maybe the lesser likely Canadians need to be more active in this way.

It was also agreed that through communication with those with disabilities, an understanding was reached that made a big difference in how they designed or built buildings. They all encouraged that

open discussion is important because if persons with disabilities do not share their needs with builders and designers they are going to be left with the minimum and it might not be enough!

Mayor Mike Bradley of Sarnia, Ontario, has made significant impacts in promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities within his city and has made a call to make this policy nation-wide. The mayors of St. John's, Mount Pearl and Labrador City were present and accepted the challenge. <http://www.thetelegram.com/Blog-Article/b/27869/The-Mayors-Challenge>

The key-note speaker was Laurie Beachell recently retired as National Coordinator of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. He has over 30 years working to create more accessible and inclusive communities. He made many thought-provoking statements that I think have real relevance to Cornerstone Housing. He noted the presence of government officials from all levels but said that often the spirit of collaboration breaks down when we have to find the dollars to go forward. He addressed the just released provincial budget noting its harsh impact on people with disabilities. He pointed out that treating everybody equally doesn't work for people who have been disadvantaged for a long time. Not all people are impacted equally by this budget. We should not, in his opinion, use a charity model when going to government, we have to use a human rights model, another profound statement. He challenged the group to think strategically about how we can position ourselves to weather the financial storm. For example, with lobbying, would the government consider exempting some people such as the disabled and seniors, from these cuts? He advised getting champions in the civil service. They will provide you with information and give you honest feedback. He said that we should be careful as to who we choose as our spokespersons and champions going forward. He challenged the audience to build on success, to find the next incremental, politically achievable step forward and to fight hard for it. I think that also speaks very pointedly to our journey, where we are at present and how to go forward.

Lorraine had the chance to meet and introduce CHS to Minister Sherry Gambin-Walsh.

From Coast to Coast Visits

By Peter Barnes

There were two visits to the Vancouver L'Arche Communities by Cornerstone Housing Society Board members in April.

I contacted Denise Haskett, Community Team Leader, and I was invited to visit the L'Arche Communities in Burnaby district of Vancouver on April 9th. When I arrived I was introduced to the core members and the assistants of Creation House. I was also introduced to the Bethel House and the Unity House core members and assistants. The three houses/communities are located in the one building but each with a unique identity. There are other L'Arche Communities throughout Vancouver. They all use the Emmaus Centre, the lower level of the L'Arche complex, used for daily programs.

Emmaus Centre is an interesting program because it is operated by L'Arche staff, assistants and administrative staff, and it serves core members of L'Arche as well as other people from the area with intellectual disabilities. L'Arche Vancouver is a part of the program entitled "Neighbour Helping Neighbour," a community lunch program on Fridays, which brings neighbours together for a meal. These community collaborative programs are examples of outreach practiced by L'Arche communities worldwide. L'Arche Vancouver also practices international outreach as they donate their recycling money to Solidarity, a L'Arche community in Brazil.

I was interested to hear that L'Arche Vancouver has a "Community Life Coordinator," who coordinates the spiritual life, including having four local clergy who support the weekly, Wednesday prayer activities. There is also a team of guitarists and singers called the Messengers who are a part of the spiritual life of the community.

I learned from the international assistants that they all apply to L'Arche Canada who then assigns them to a L'Arche community somewhere in Canada. Cornerstone Housing Society will also avail of this hiring practice when it becomes established and operational as a L'Arche community.

I wish to thank Denise for arranging for my visit to their communities, especially to Creation House for sharing lunch with me and for taking me to Tim Horton's for their Saturday outing, and to Bethel House for giving me a tour of Vancouver en route to the Ferry to Vancouver Island.

Visit to L'Arche Vancouver

By David Buckley

In April 2016 whilst in Vancouver at a medical conference I had the opportunity to visit L'Arche Vancouver.

I visited on a Wednesday afternoon and evening. Wednesday is the day the L'Arche community gets together to have a prayer gathering allowing me to meet many members of the community.

Denise Haskett is the community leader, she showed me around the "Shiloah" the name given to the main site where there are three houses Bethel, Unity and Creation and a large office and day area are situated.

The prayer meeting was initially guided by a local priest but then everyone who wished was given the opportunity to speak up and give comments. I was able to inform them of CHS and our progress towards a L'Arche community in St John's. To conclude songs were sung and then everyone returned to their houses to have a meal. I joined the Bethel house to share a meal and to get to know the core members and assistants.

This L'Arche community has existed for forty years and therefore a lot of the core members are older. It is situated outside central Vancouver near a metro station in a pleasant suburban area which backs onto a Park. There are three other homes in the neighbourhood which I didn't have a chance to see. They are well established in the larger community and offer programs to local households such as gardening and delivering meals to the elderly.

On the Friday of the week I visited they were getting ready for an art sale which is a yearly event where paintings made by the core members are sold.



Cornerstone Events

CHS first Jam Circle

By Clotilde Raydon

On the last Saturday of May, I woke up a bit nervous about the long day to come. Indeed, there was to be a first in my life and in the life of Cornerstone as well: a Jam Circle! It was all about being together and doing music with very little frame or obligation. No perfect performance expected here but rather a big communication opportunity for everybody,

disabled or not. And I can tell you I felt disabled myself, being a classical pianist not used to improvisation!

So here came the time to start, in this little room we had booked for the occasion in the St Thomas' church hall, that I had tried to make cozy with small lamps, table clothes everywhere, and a nice little circle of chairs where everybody would face everybody. First, we did "warm up" with a few action songs inspired by the Mother Goose program, and let me tell you that they seem to have been generally well received amongst the core members who were quite excited by the rhythms and repetition of them. Then was the time to choose and pick an instrument amongst a fairly vast array of those some of us had kindly brought for the occasion. And here we went, on an uncertain path for a good half an hour of improv, laughter, red-in-the-cheeks-sometimes, trying to spontaneously communicate with each other, forgetting about the barriers we sometimes build to prevent our natural inner self to burst out. Songs came out by themselves, followed by the others in an endless chant accompanied by drums of all sorts. Sometimes, a drum solo pattern would start, followed by others mimicking and completing it in a harmonious piece the core members would surely appreciate. Sometimes, an embarrassed silence would break the beat, and that also is fine in the spirit of L'Arche!

Amidst all that came out three magical moments, helped greatly by the presence of a cymbal on a foot, that went to be placed at some point within reach of Mark's drum stick. He was first very astonished to have produced that sound, but soon enjoying it, and he became then at once our conductor. Hearing our response each time he was banging on the cymbal made him the happiest of men. Gee! I had never seen such a big smile on his face! It was so magical that we all stopped at once, which broke the musical flow on the spot. But well, show me a baby who wouldn't stumble after having completed her first row of steps on her two legs, eh? So sure enough, magic resumed shortly after, when Mary-Beth and Anton took the lead each in turn. We had so much fun following them and improvising patterns based on what they had to willingly offer us on that moment!

Just for those precious short minutes, I dare say that the Jam Circle has found its purpose! I can't wait for next time we meet! And of course, we'll learn

more and more about improving it each time we meet, there's a huge potential there, every fourth Saturday of the month. Mark it in your agendas!

Our monthly walk in June

By Petra Sunner



When we arrived at the field house for our monthly walk we found out the track was closed - off to the public - within split-seconds it was decided to drive over to Kent's pond which is at least somewhat sheltered from the wind, because we cannot miss our monthly walk no matter what the thermometer in June says! ; - and it was low!). Off we went with some extra protective stuff retrieved from the cars and walked and chatted, feeling warmer soon, and the warm tea Clotilde had in her knapsack for all of us helped too, with our snack in the gazebo at the pond after walking - we had a grand time together again.

Here is a photo from a slightly warmer community walk in July:





A drawing about walking - Jacqueline Raydon



Thank You! from the Community

Our member Anton Buckley was happy to accept a generous donation of \$617 to Cornerstone Housing Society given by Alexander and Christine Wunderli from Switzerland.



Second Annual Community Flea Market

On June 11, CHS had its second annual flea market. The event was again a great success. Thank you to everyone who donated and helped out!



Happy Birthday to YOU!



The following Cornerstone Members and friends have birthdays in April, May, and June. If we've missed you – we're sorry! Please let a member of the Community Building Committee know.

Mark Andrews
Anton Buckley
Spiro Angelopoulos
Madeline Hurley

Luc Rolland
Marilyn Andrews
Ben Anderson-White
Jessica Dawe Lynch



Congratulations to **Sarah** and **Wesley King** on their wedding in June! We wish you many years of love and happiness.

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