

SECOND OPINION

The newsletter of the Second Opinion Society — July 2015

New staff, new board at SOS

Second Opinion Society held its Annual General Meeting for 2015 on July 16. An excellent turnout of 30 members heard a summary of the past year's activities, caught up on the organization's financial state of affairs, and listened to a stirring presentation from SOS founder Gisela Sartori.

Gisela highlighted the past history of SOS, and talked about the philosophical foundations and guiding precepts of the organization.

Members also elected the SOS board of directors who will see the organization through to its 25th anniversary next year. The new board is Eric Acheson, Brian Eaton, Brent Ramsay, Leslie Robert, Gisela Sartori, Shannon Shepherd and Kim Tucker.

The board's priorities will include strengthening systemic advocacy for SOS, maintaining the drop-in centre, planning for a guest speaker this fall, and looking ahead to SOS's 25th anniversary next year.

SOS also welcomes its new staff, Hannah Engasser and Susan Gwynne-Timothy. They replace the recently-retired Leslie Robert, and Hailey Hechtman, who has become the new executive director for Whitehorse disability organization Tegatha 'Oh Zheh.

Susan returned to SOS this spring, having formerly worked for SOS as administrative coordinator from 2009-2012. She is originally from London, Ontario, where she attended university and rowed for 12 years at the varsity and jun-

ior national level. Susan studied history and art history, and worked in London England for 12 years, where her jobs ranged from administrative positions at an art centre and antique dealer to an outpatient psychiatric hospital.

Susan is fascinated by the relationship between personal healing and people's ability to improve their lives, including the healing value of contributing to community. She has taught Women's Studies, Reiki, and meditation classes at Yukon College, and been active with the Council of Canadians. Susan lives at Marsh Lake with her husband, two boys and the family dog.

Hannah has been living in the Yukon for the last 20 years. Originally from France, she has been a Canadian citizen for 17 years, and has been contributing to the not-for-profit sector throughout her entire time in the Yukon.

During the last 12 years, Hannah has worked as an employment and career development counsellor in the French community and as employment officer for a short period of time with one of the local the First Nations government.

Hannah has always fostered a humanistic and holistic approach to her work with people. For the last 10 years she has practiced meditation, leading meditation sessions for the benefit of



the community. She has also practiced karate with Todd Hardy and has taught this same art to children and adults for five years.

Hannah has been with SOS for the last three months, driven by the passion to contribute to SOS and people who need the most support in the community.

In memoriam: Anti-shock crusader Leonard Frank

One of the most fascinating figures of the international psychiatric survivors' movement passed away this past winter. Leonard Frank was 82 when he died in San Francisco in early January of this year.

Frank's reputation as a philosopher, author and humanitarian was legend, and his influence in the movement was known worldwide.

Frank was considered a nonconformist from his early adolescence in the 1950s, when his rebellion against his family's norms caused them to have him hospitalized in a psychiatric institution in his mid-20s in 1963.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Ivy League Wharton School, Leonard had moved to San Francisco, grown a beard, become a vegetarian, and refused to follow in his father's footsteps in the real estate business, .

Involuntarily committed, Frank was subjected to insulin shock therapy, perhaps one of the most barbaric treatments in the psychiatric industry's kit-bag of tortures. The more than fifty insulin and electroshock treatments left Frank with severe memory

loss. The three-year period preceding his hospitalization was wiped out and most of his memory of his high school and college education had effectively disappeared.

The reeducation process took years, and Leonard would write voluminous notes to himself when he came across material he wished to preserve. These notes formed the basis for seven masterful volumes of quotations, published by Random House to national acclaim.

Leonard's experience with the psychiatric system led him to become active in the growing psychiatric survivors movement.

He became a staff member of Madness Network News, a pioneering antipsychiatry journal, in 1972, and cofounded NAPA, the Network Against Psychiatric Assault, in 1974.

As one of the foremost psychiatric survivor movements, NAPA prided itself on its stand opposing "all forms of coercive, fraudulent psychiatric interventions."

In 1978, Frank edited *The History of Shock Treatment*, followed by *The Electroshock Quotationary* in 2006, and in 2011, *The Szasz Quotationary: The Wit and Wisdom of Thomas Szasz*, co-published with the distinguished author.

Right up to his death, Frank was an active member of the Eugene, Oregon-based Mind Freedom International, an organization that has long been in the vanguard against psychiatric injustice.

Toronto-based psychiatric survivor and social activist Bonnie Burstow summed up Leonard Frank's fearlessness and activism well:

“Whenever clarity was needed, whenever someone was needed to spell out the profound violation of human rights or to cut through the tangle of psychobabble, there was Leonard, warrior that he was, uttering forbidden truths, articulating them loud and clear, never pulling his punches, never re-treating an inch.

Such was the strength and the certainty of the man. At once a friend, a team member, a social justice activist, a seer, and a voice in the wildness that willynilly spoke truth to power.”

Leonard brought that voice, conviction, and his unassuming personal warmth and friendship to the Yukon in early 1996, when SOS brought him to Whitehorse to speak out against planned initiatives to revive electroshock treatment here.

The SOS campaign against electroshock was a success due in large measure to the eloquence and courage of Leonard Frank. He is fondly remembered by the many people whose lives he touched.



The Inner Activist

In mid-July, SOS had a visit and presentation from Brad Jarvis, who works with a unique program in the Vancouver area called The Inner Activist.

IA is a dynamic course of study that enables people with a commitment to their commu-

nities to create a more self-aware, balanced, and inspired social change practice.

“The essence of the training is to learn to lead with strength from within,” says Jarvis, project director and one of the founders of the Inner Activist program. “In order to successfully lead as a change agent, and engage in the challenging process of social change—and avoid burnout—you need to develop an awareness of your strengths, limitations, motivations, and intentions.”

In other words, you need to do your own personal work, at a deep level, in order to not only survive what is an intensely demanding environment, but also contribute from a place of grounded commitment.

“Who are social change agents? The kind of people who imagine a better future and actively work for change in the community.”

This includes, for instance, people in environmental work and social justice; people who work for trade unions; groups who support immigrants or minorities, battered women, and aboriginals struggling against mining companies; and people who oppose corruption and violence, helping marginalized people anywhere in the world. And people who don’t consider themselves the activist type – but who are active agents in the world who seek change and social justice.

“Our intent is to help you find ways to bring your personal awareness into broader application beyond yourself—a marriage between the political and the personal. This includes deepening your appreciation of diverse points of view to expand your understanding of our present predicament. None

of us has the whole picture.”

Brad holds an MA in moral, social and political philosophy. His involvement in advocacy and activism goes back to the early '80s, when he worked for three years in the Ottawa office of a registered charity.

With a passionate interest in personal development and its implications for social action, he has pursued personal development at the Haven Institute, and has training in Nonviolent Communication.

The Inner Activist program has been offered since 2011 at The Haven, a personal growth and transformation centre on Gabriola Island, British Columbia.

Judi Johnny—Advocate, Activist

“I was born with a disability,” said Judi Johnny in 2011. “I’ve been disabled all my life, that’s just a physical sense, because I’ve hardly ever thought of that as a major inconvenience. I thought of trying to get the services as an inconvenience, but not my disability.”

That was typical of Judi. Judi Johnny passed away on February 4, 2015, a little over three months after her 65th birthday. A tireless advocate for disability rights and social change, she never let her disability hinder her from an active community, social and political life that would tire out many an able-bodied person.

Judi was a longtime member of SOS’s Board of Directors, and chaired many a board meeting with a brusque, no-nonsense approach, cutting to the heart of the issues

with her trademark directness and wit. In addition to her contribution to SOS, Johnny served on the board of Whitehorse’s Victoria Faulkner Womens’ Centre and the Status of Women Council, as well as the national executive for DAWN Canada, (DisAbled Women’s Network Canada), the board of the Yukon Council for DisAbility, and the federal NDP’s Committee on Disability.

Mobility was important to Judi, as it enabled her to stay active in her community. When not riding the Whitehorse Handi Bus to one or another meeting or social gathering, she could be seen wheeling around town in her motorized wheelchair, always with a smile and a greeting for whoever she met.

Judi was born in 1949, in a float house off the coast of Smith Inlet, BC, 80 km by air from Port Hardy on the northern tip of Vancouver Island, and the site of the Great Bear Rain Forest, the largest intact chunk of temperate rain forest in the world, and a haven for the region’s grizzly bears.

Johnny could be as fierce and tenacious as one of her homeland’s bears herself, when it came to standing up for what she believed was right. A residential school survivor, a post-polio syndrome survivor, and a fluent speaker of her native Kwakwaka’wakw language, she fought for better Handi-Bus service, increased accessibility to local businesses and services, and a number of other important social issues.

Judi’s sense of social justice impressed many, among them former Whitehorse resident Carol Tennis:

“How did she end up so cheerful, social, and active in the community? Where did her

determination come from? She felt that any ruckus she could stir up which would help the poor, disabled, women, children and anyone else that needed it was beneficial. She was one tough cookie. I believe she worked so hard on so many people's and organizations' behalf because no one could or would act for her in her early life. Huge motivation, that."

Johnny's passing leaves a big gap, when it comes to spokespersons for disability and human rights, who aren't afraid to call it as they see it.

Breaking News: Robert Whitaker in Whitehorse in late September

SOS is delighted to announce that we will be hosting a visit by Robert Whitaker in late September. Whitaker is an international authority on not only the dangers of psychiatry, but also the way the "mental health" system has evolved into its present form.

Whitaker is the author of several groundbreaking books on the psychiatric system, beginning with *Mad in America*, a hugely popular and influential look at how psychopharmacy eroded and displaced the ear-

lier movement holistic, community-based healing for those in psychosocial crisis.

Whitaker's latest book—co-authored with Lisa Cosgrove—is *Psychiatry Under the Influence*. It is an in-depth look at the way pharmaceutical money and the psychiatric professions closed boundaries have corrupted the way we understand and deal with mental disorder. Normal behaviours, of children as well as adults, have been labelled as disease and "treated" with drugs, while alternative approaches have been pushed aside in favour of medication.

Whitaker was SOS's guest three years ago, and his visit was very well received. He is an engaging and very down-to-earth speaker who knows not only the inner workings and history of psychiatry, but can also relate to the needs and interests of those directly involved.

Whitaker will be in Whitehorse September 28, 29, and 30, including a public talk and two one-day workshops, one on psychiatry and the other on ADHD and youth.

SOS would like to thank the YTG Professional Development Fund for its generous and thoughtful support in this effort.

Watch for further details!



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