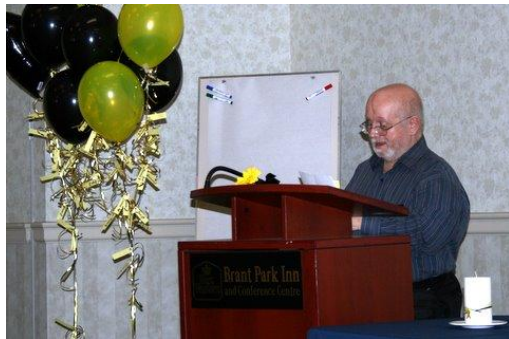


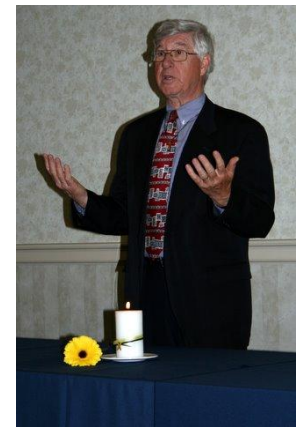
“Let’s Celebrate Freedom”

When the Ontario government made a commitment to close all institutions by 2009, Gary Kusch was adamant that we would need a celebration to mark this historic event. Planning for the event began with Gary, Dave Jordan, and Maryanne Drago. As planning began, we enlisted the support of some young people (Chris Taverner and Donny Tobicoe) involved in the Transitions Program. Thanks to the efforts and planning done by this group Community Living Brant's “Let’s Celebrate Freedom” event came to life.



On March 31/09 Community Living Brant celebrated the closure of all institutions in Ontario. A small, intimate remembrance ceremony was held to honour the lives of people who lived part of their lives in an institution. People supported who had lived in an institution included family, friends and staff to join them in this time of remembrance. The meaning of the colours yellow and black which were reflected in all our events, were read by Shawn Guylee to people in

attendance. A young person who receives support, Donny Tobicoe, contributed through the reading of a poem to honour the past experiences of people who have lived in an institution. As people brought forward yellow flowers tied in black ribbon to place around the candles, the names of people supported who are with us now and who have passed away were read aloud. The ceremony included times reflection, both as a group and individually, that were led by Rev. Randy MacKenzie. It was a time to reflect on people's journeys, remember those no longer with us, and look forward to the future.



The evening continued with a “Let’s Celebrate Freedom” party and dance where over 175 people came out to celebrate this historic event. The evening kicked off with an official welcome and thanks by Gary Kusch on behalf of the Board of Directors. A toast to celebrate the closures was made by Dave Jordan followed by a video full of photos of people from our community who had returned home from institution. As well, a special time capsule was

created to hold memorable items from people supported, staff and friends that were symbols of life in an institution, a memory of someone important, and keepsakes that

reflected freedom. The evening was filled with good music and dancing, stories being shared, and a cake to celebrate the day!

The next event, on April 3rd, was the presentation of the Community Living Ontario plaque to Dave Levac, our local M.P.P., by three individuals who had returned from institutions and Janet Reansbury our Executive Director. The plaque was to recognize the decision and commitment of successive Ontario governments to close institutions and support Community Living alternatives for people who have an intellectual disability. Mr. Levac was extremely appreciative and reiterated his belief in and willingness to support people and the organization in any way possible.



**To learn more about people's experiences of living in an institution,
click on this link**

to

People First Canada's Freedom Tour

<http://www.freeourpeople.ca/>