

Institutional abuse can include physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse perpetrated in an institutional setting. The consequences of institutional abuse include damage to the survivor's physical, mental and spiritual health. This damage can include: self-abuse; prolonged and reoccurring depression; severe dissociation; addictions; suicidal and self-destructive behaviour; flashbacks; learning disabilities; inappropriate psychological psychiatric labeling and diagnosis; learned anti-social behaviour and identity; impulsive aggressive behaviour; and inability to form close, trusting relationships.

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# Until Someone Listens

## *Recovering from Institutional Abuse*

The Ontario Training School for Girls in Cambridge (then Galt), Ontario was opened in 1933. It was renamed The Grandview Training School in 1967 and closed nine years later, in 1976.

Grandview was a correctional institution for girls between the ages 12 and 18, though some there were as young as 10. Sentences were indeterminate, and detention periods were left to the discretion of the Galt/Grandview staff. The average stay in Grandview was 4 to 12 months, although some girls were kept for as long as 4 years.

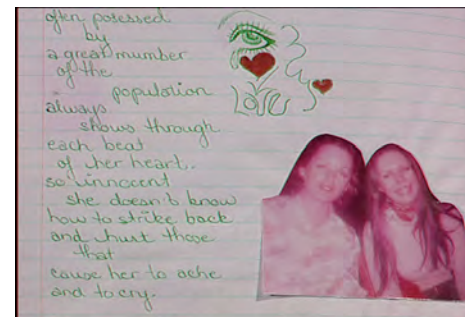
On most occasions these children had violated no law, but had been remanded to Grandview by provincial family court judges who found them to be unmanageable, incorrigible, and/or truant. This was so because the Training Schools Act declared that when a parent or guardian was deemed to be unable to provide for a girl's social, emotional and educational needs, and when no other agency could provide the required care, the court had the power to send her to a Provincial Training school. On admission, the girl became a ward of the Province of Ontario, which assumed responsibility for her care, custody and control. For all intents and purposes, the government became her parent and primary caregiver, while her true parents lost the legal right to fill this role for their daughter.



The purpose of the Training School Act was to provide “the children therein with training and treatment and with moral, physical, academic and vocational education.” Theoretically, these schools were supposed to support the improvement of family relationships, self-esteem, educational and work skills. The actual experiences of the girls at Galt/Grandview, however, contradict these declared goals.

In reality, Grandview placed young girls into a punitive and deprived environment, were, by and large, dehumanizing and systemically brutal. The reality of institutional A staff person working at the facility in the 1930's wrote about conditions which she describes eight year old girls being “thrown in a cage for whispering, giggling or

The daily schedule was regimented, inflexible and harsh. Education and training seen as being poor prospects for education and skill development. The use of common, even for minor transgressions and over the years each of the residential area. Segregation was justified as a preventative action, but no formal process was was no appeal. Churchill House was special--a separate maximum security facility where residents who were thought to be “disturbed and unable to adjust“ were



the values and practice of which life was far more harsh than helpful. described as abusive. She spilling milk.”

were minimal. Grandview girls were isolation and segregation was buildings acquired a segregation apparent in its application, and there

sent for varying lengths of time and which was staffed by both male and female guards. As Susan Vella, the lawyer representing the Grandview Survivors Support Group has observed, "...there were many opportunities for an abuse of power to be exercised, manifested in psychological, physical and sexual forms at Grandview, and in Churchill House in particular."

During its many years of operation, allegations of physical and sexual abuse at Galt/Grandview were raised but disregarded. Although some staff members were disturbed by the actions of their colleagues, few voiced their concerns. Others acted to protect or comfort particular residents. In 1976, the Solicitor General launched an investigation, but the result of that process was never made public.

Then in 1991, a psychologist in St. Catharines, Ontario heard remarkably similar accounts of institutional abuse from two of his clients who had been at Grandview at different times. Neither woman knew the other. He encouraged them to take their stories to the public and promised his support. One of the women went to the police, and in 1992, the Waterloo Regional Police and the Ontario Provincial Police began a review of allegations of physical and sexual abuse at the Grandview Training School, primarily during the 1960's and 1970's.

For many Grandview survivors, this investigation provided an opportunity to finally speak out about their experiences, and to learn that they were not alone in their experience of abuse. At the same time, the investigation resurrected traumatic memories and long-suppressed feelings.

### The Film and this Study Guide

***Until Someone Listens*** documents the healing process of a group of those Grandview survivors. We hear from women who are in the midst of healing and learn about their experiences in the passage from trauma to recovery.

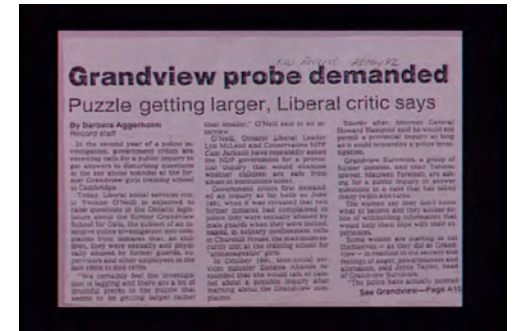
Their stories offer insight to those who have had similar experiences, to families and friends of survivors, and to professional staff who work with abused women and children. We hope as well, that the Grandview survivors who appear in the film will challenge stereotypical ideas about abuse and recovery.

The purpose of the film is to promote individual and collective healing for all survivors and to increase the community's awareness of the continuing danger of institutional abuse. The Grandview survivors themselves hope their experiences can be instrumental in the prevention of hurt and abuse to other children.

To achieve all of these objectives, this film guide has been prepared to help you and your group explore the issues raised by the film and to plan practical responses suited to your situation and circumstances.

There are many ways that the film might be used, including:

- to raise awareness of the issue of institutional abuse with the members of your group or community
- as part of a formal training workshop to help a professional staff group learn about the issue
- as a tool to help other abuse survivors talk about and deal with their experiences, or to help the family members of survivors who struggle in another way with the effects of abuse



No doubt there are many people in your community who could serve a useful facilitating or resource role when you use the film. Of course, you will want to hear from survivors of institutional abuse themselves. You might also want to invite someone who works with survivors in a shelter or counseling setting to participate, or someone who knows the issue from a legal or research perspective.

But whatever your purposes for using these stories, and however you use them, the following additional background will help you prepare for and respond to the issues that arise.

### **The Grandview Survivors Support Group**

With the launching of the police investigation, some Grandview survivors began to connect with each other for the purpose of bringing their stories and their concerns to the government and to public. Members shared a common desire to seek and develop help for the harm incurred by the women who were at Galt/Grandview. The Grandview Survivors Support Group (GSSG) formed in 1992, established a Board of Directors, and hired legal counsel. Through a considerable effort to reach out to other survivors across the country, their membership soon grew to over 200 women.

*The GSSG determined that it wanted to make a difference in the way that society responds to adult survivors of childhood abuse and children in need. It was felt that in order to make a difference, not only did they have to achieve a remedy which would provide them with the supports necessary to assist in their own healing process, but also one that could effect systemic change and raise awareness of the prevalence of child abuse in institutional settings.*



### **The Grandview Agreement: *For Individual Benefit and Systemic Change***

After a lengthy negotiation with the Provincial government (from which GSSG had received funding to pursue its objectives), the Grandview Agreement was developed. The primary goal of the Agreement was to address the consequences of abuse rather than simply provide financial compensation. The result was a comprehensive “healing package” to support and assist the Grandview survivors to achieve their goals for independence and participation in the community.

The Agreement was created using *an alternative dispute resolution model--an*

**alternative to court-based actions**--in recognition of the inadequacy of the courts in addressing the abuse of women, as well as the limitations of the current health, social assistance and corrections systems in Ontario.

It is important to note that the Agreement was implemented at the same time that criminal proceedings were taking place. Although the process for negotiating and implementing the Agreement was separate from the criminal prosecutions, a stipulation of the criminal proceedings was that survivors could not talk to each other about their specific experiences at Grandview. However necessary this requirement was to justice for the accused, it did not serve the needs felt by the women. "It was difficult," said one survivor, "trying to heal when we couldn't talk about our hurt. It only made me feel more abandoned and ashamed."

### ***Application and Adjudication***

Each applicant was required to secure independent legal counsel to ensure that she had sufficient objective information to make informed decisions. The government paid up to \$1000 per applicant toward this assistance and representation.

The Adjudication function was independent of the courts and the Ontario government. All of the adjudicators were women with experience in the judicial process and knowledgeable in the issues related to violence against women. A First Nations adjudicator was available to hear the application of any woman who requested it. Every effort was made to ensure the comfort of the survivors in the design of the adjudication process. For example, the hearings were held in comfortable settings in an effort to create a warm, friendly and supportive environment; the adjudicators traveled to the women's communities; the women were encouraged to appear with a supportive friend, therapist or family member hearings were held in the homes of women who were ill.

The adjudicators decision was sent to each applicants in a letter, which included the decision as well as the reasons for that decision. All decisions were final and there was no appeal process.

### ***Individual Benefits***

- a financial award within an established range of \$3,000 to \$60,000
- financial or budget counseling
- vocational or educational upgrading and training, access to psycho-educational assessment to facilitate career and educational decisions
- therapy with a chosen therapist including entry into a residential treatment program if so desired
- up to \$5000 in residential treatment (e.g. for substance abuse, sexual abuse)
- a contingency fund of up to \$3000 per person for items not covered sufficiently by other benefits
- an individual acknowledgment by the government of the abuse or mistreatment, recognizing that the woman was harmed by her experience and that there could be no justification for what happened to her

### ***Group Benefits***

- a dedicated crisis line, funded by the government, operated by the Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis
- tattoo and scar reduction

- a statement of apology by the government of Ontario, at the conclusion of the criminal proceedings, for the abuse and the acknowledgement that the women were harmed and not to blame

Included in the healing package were remedies that address the systematic issues and policy concerns which are aimed at improving government and community response to, and prevention of, institutional abuse of children in care facilities, and to the needs of survivors of that abuse. One example is the film, *Until Some Listens*, and the use of it to increase public awareness of the problem of institutional abuse in both public and private settings.

### ***Evaluation***

Overall, the participants experienced the adjudication process as the most positive aspect of the entire Agreement process. These women felt heard, affirmed in their experience, and validated. For many the adjudications were turning points in their recovery. At the same time, the survivors suffered the pain of having to remember and recount the traumatic experiences.

As lawyer Susan Vella explained:

*“Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Healing Package to date has been the empowerment it has given to these survivors who have evolved as a result of participating successfully in the process and advancing their stories and demands with dignity and integrity. It is also an example to advocates of a way to design a process which will in and of itself be empowering because of the dominant role played by survivors in the articulation of their own stories and in their own identification of both their needs and supports needed to fulfill their needs.”*

There were different levels of satisfaction with the process. Some survivors felt disappointed with the financial settlement grid. Some felt that men who had suffered institutional abuse were better compensated than the women. “Although the number of women who feel extremely negative is small. Their feelings of unhappiness are more intense than the feelings of satisfaction expressed by most.”

### **The Issues**

*Until Some Listens* is about systemic abuse. Seen as a whole, it gives audiences an opportunity to explore many facets of institutionalized brutality and abuse, and how it effects inmates, survivors, staff, families, and communities.

Most Grandview girls had not been involved in criminal activity. Their “crimes” were the troubled, searching reactions of all young girls who may be deprived at home, or at school, or who are marginalized in their communities. They were “sent away”, often with promises of good schooling, room and board—a safe home in the country for girls who were in need, like themselves. However, some judges made it very clear that the girls were being incarcerated.

But whatever they were told, once at Grandview these young persons were jailed and punished, and immersed in the rage and despair of others. Many were sexually, physically and emotionally abused. They were labeled incorrigible, sub-intelligent, manipulative and sexually promiscuous. Many internalized these derogatory labels and still struggle with feelings of low self-worth.

During the course of the film, a number of themes appear and re-appear. Through each conversation with the Grandview survivors, we can see how these themes have lived out in their lives.

**Some of the issues facing survivors of insitutional abuse:**

- Shame and anger are predominate among survivors. They are unable to live with the memories of what they did to survive the abusive conditions imposed at Grandview.
- Nightmares, panic and anxiety attacks; memories that will not cease.
- Many women experience relationship difficulties. Not trusting enough to become intimate is very common among the women. Low self esteem, uncontrollable anger, and despair make intimacy difficult, so that some survivors lack the healthy emotional and social support of friends, family, and associates. Family connections are especially vulnerable, as many survivors felt abandoned by their families during their Grandview confinement.
- Finding a successful career paths is difficult for some survivors due to their lack of education, self-esteem, and encouragement. This creates the conditions for poverty and financial difficulties. Those who do have jobs are often relegated to low-level positions with few opportunities for advancement.
- Many survivors experience a need to run. This may include running back to, and living on the streets. It can be difficult to stay in one place or job for any length of time. Several women have left their homes and families while others struggle with prostitution and institutionalization.
- A number of Grandview women spend time in prison. Many find themselves unable to adjust to everyday life. Some have no place to go when they are released from prison and find themselves trying to survive in hostels or on the street.
- The triggering of memories has brought back the urge for some survivors to self-mutilate. Substance abuse, addictions and eating disorders are common.
- Lack of trust with authority and 'establishment' figures such as doctors, psychiatrists, and therapists creates limitations in work life, in institutions and in the community.
- Difficulty handling the responsibility of parenting their own children, means that the damage done at Grandview can be passed on through generations.
- Women sometimes find themselves becoming physically or emotionally abusive towards others.
- Many of the women suffer memory loss and numbed feelings about their experiences at Grandview, and frustration as a result.
- Claustrophobia and agoraphobia are common, as is dissociation and multiple personality--so that what once served as a way of escape from suffering now



stands as a barrier to emotional and psychological health.

- A significant number of Grandview survivors experience health problems, such as AIDS, cancer, and stress-related conditions.

**And other issues that reach beyond the survivors:**

- People working with survivors of abuse often suffer from *vicarious traumatization*. Friends, family members, partners, professional support workers may suffer from the effects of the pain and suffering expressed by the survivor to whom they are relating. Care providers can recognize these responses and develop their own support networks to assist them in their efforts.
- Workers in agencies or institutions where abuse is known or suspected are often unable to make these facts, or their suspicions, known.
- Despite much greater exposure in recent years--by survivors of Grandview among others, institutional abuse isn't going away. It can be found today in jails and penitentiaries, group homes, retirement facilities, foster homes, and juvenile detention centres.
- Institutional abuse is more than just a personal problem for survivors; it's a societal problem that reflects what we all think about the status of children, the aged, the infirm, and the imprisoned in our midst. It's society's failure--our failure--to meet our responsibilities to people in our care. Survivors must struggle everyday to overcome the damage done by the problem, but all of us, together, must solve it.

***Until Someone Listens:***  
**Stories of Survivors and Victims**

Each segment or chapter in the film features a Grandview survivor whose experience reflects a particular path toward healing. You will see women at different points in their struggle. Some have barely begun, while others well along. Some have been shattered, while some work daily to keep their lives together. And others who see themselves as victims rather than survivors.

Though many Grandview girls experienced similar forms of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, each developed her own survival skills and sometimes shared those skills with others. Each survivor, in other words, found her own healing path. Some have benefitted from the support of therapists, friends, family, and partners. Others have chosen a more solitary journey. The women in the film make it clear that there are many effective ways to deal with the consequences of institutional abuse.

The film can be watched (and used), either chapter by chapter, or in its complete length. Following is a brief synopsis of the chapters, with some additional comments

concerning the issues raised in each one.

## Chapter One: Bev Mann

Bev's segment opens with the reminder that there were other women whose lives after Grandview were short-lived, who succumbed to the trauma and damage of their institutionalized years. In an emotional and spiritual sense, they never left Grandview.

Bev was sent to Grandview when she was 12 years old, for indeterminate sentences. While there, Bev was sexually abused by a guard, who had encouraged a father-like relationship with her.

Like with most Grandview survivors, Bev suffered from feelings of shame and the breakdown of trust.

*...the hardest thing for me was the breach of trust. I couldn't believe that I was forced to do this type of thing with someone I thought was on my side, someone I thought was going to protect me.*

Bev describes the help and healing she has received, a combination of education, therapy and other forms of support. She expresses concern about the struggle to resolve feelings of shame and hurt--feelings she believes she will never completely escape. But she doesn't see these feelings as a sign of any kind of failure--she knows she was not responsible for the abuse done to her--and she is committed to a life-long process of growth and recovery..



*I had to be educated around the fact that it wasn't my fault... When I have really difficult days... If I don't feel like working through something, I think its often based on fear more than anything else. So I understand I can't move ahead as quickly as I'd like to. In other ways, I think I've done extremely well.*

Bev worked as the outreach worker for the Grandview Survivors Support Group, and is the narrating guide through the film.

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**for discussion...**

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Bev's description of the way sexual abuse works in a closed institution is brutally clear. A young person, looking for a parent figure in a time and place where one is most needed, is betrayed by the custodian she turns to, someone who abuses his position of authority and grooms her to satisfy his need.

She was sent to Grandview in the first place after she reported a sexual assault on her companion, and was not believed. Has our attitude concerning sexual assault advanced to the point where a young person can disclose such incidents without fear of persecution?

Bev tells us that she came from a family that cared for her. So it's ironic as well as tragic that her punishment was to be separated from the very people most

willing and able to help her.

Bev's search for healing through many different routes underlines the fact that there isn't a single "best way" to recovery. Survivors need to be supported along whatever path works for them.

Bev has worked hard and long enough at her recovery to understand that there are good days and bad days, and that both are essential and inevitable along the way.

In a sequence not included in the final film edit, Bev and her close friend and sister Grandview survivor, Sue, talk about some crucial survival techniques that the girls at the institution developed. In fact, several of the women interviewed described forming Grandview "families", choosing others to become surrogate mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, to provide relationships of comfort and care.

Bev and Sue initiated their friendship in this way almost three decades ago, when Bev approached Sue at Grandview to ask her to be her "URBF"--her universal real best friend--the highest category of friendship at the institution. Bev liked Sue, and realized that by designating her in this way, she could count on Sue's protection and support. Sue took Bev under her wing at the time, and to this day continues to support her good friend.

## Chapter Two: Brandy Battle

Brandy was 15 when she was sent to Grandview. Both her parents were alcohol struggles with drug abuse, prostitution and frequent jail sentences. She was also member who appeared to befriend her, who offered her privileges and then expected. And like all Grandview residents, Brandy was forced to submit to medical pelvic standard practice at that time to impose internal examinations on the girls when they the occasions when they were returned from attempts to run away, or whenever they symptoms that might warrant such treatment.

Brandy talks about the relationship between her memories of abuse and her abuse.



abusers and Brandy too sexually abused by a staff sexual favours in return. examinations. It was first arrived at the facility, on were thought to have clinical

experiences with drug

*You have all these problems and you try and hide the problems. You figure the more drugs you do, the more it's taking away the pain and the hurt and the problem. It's subsiding momentarily, but when you come down, boy, it's three times worse.*

For Brandy, jail is often relief from the danger and risks on the street.

*When I get screwed up on the drugs, and I haven't slept for days, that's a danger zone. So a lot of times, I look at it, if I get busted, it's not getting busted - I'm getting rescued.*

At the same time. Brandy has hope for her future.

*Most of all, I wish for a better life.*

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**for discussion...**

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Brandy's story invariably elicits strong reaction from viewers who have no sympathy for her apparently destructive lifestyle, and who may even believe that she deserves her fate. So we must guard against "blaming the victim" when considering her story. Other abuse survivors especially may counter-identify with Brandy and be apt to blame her in the process. Group facilitators will need to work hard to help the group get beyond such reactions.

What happened at Grandview doesn't justify self-destructive choices later on, but at the same time abuse is more devastating to some victims than to others. The question is, how can we turn our condemnation of Brandy's destructive behaviour to compassion?

We might begin by reminding ourselves that notwithstanding her subsequent choices, what happened to Brandy is not her fault. Her struggle is against self-loathing and the damage to her self-esteem.

We need to ask what has been missing for Brandy, in terms of community or institutional support. Can't more be done in our institutions? It seems that the justice system is not willing to provide for treatment, in any meaningful sense; it just keeps putting people in jail. In time like these, when the government is cutting back service, the public must advocate even fiercely. More than the range or variety of service, Brandy's story shows that we must demand more continuity, and more depth or intensity of service as well.

Brandy says that life can be so hard that jail is sometimes a relief, a rescue. But what hope for service, for adequate attention to her needs, exists there?



### **Chapter Three: Peggy Lynn Madden**

Peggy Lynn had a difficult life from a very young age. She was first sexually assaulted when she was 3. After running away from her family home, and then from a succession of foster and group homes, she was sent to Grandview as a 14 year-old, charged with incorrigibility.

For Peggy Lynn, Grandview provided a home, structure and predictability. The institution offered her experiences that she feels she would have missed had

she stayed in the community.

*For the most part it was a good experience for me. I didn't have to go to school. I worked in the kitchen, so I learned how to be a good waitress. I knew the rules and I knew what was expected of me... it was easier for me to go with the program and do things other girls weren't doing. I saw how other girls were being treated when they didn't go by the rules...*

Peggy Lynn still experiences guilt about the abuse she experienced.

*The abuse first started when I was told that if I didn't do what was asked of me, all my privileges would be revoked, and my privileges were everything to me, so it was a threat. So I went along with it for a long time... I should have done something to stop it. I'm 41 and I still have a problem with that.*

The damage she experienced as a result of her abuse there caused her personality to fragment, and at times, to shatter. Peggy Lynn, like many abuse survivors experiences multiple personalities.

*At Grandview, I split off into other personalities. It has caused problems in relationships.*

Peggy Lynn has a loving and healing relationship with Marilyn, her mother-in-law who she describes as "the mother I never had". We see them together, candidly discussing Peggy Lynn's experiences with abuse and multiplicity. It's plain that Marilyn's down-to-earth wisdom and compassion have been healing for Peggy Lynn.

*I'm learning too. This is all new for me. I can understand more clearly because of her past... What child wouldn't be emotionally disturbed? She'd have to have all these other little people to survive life...The incident that happened when she was three... that's traumatic to a child's mind... When Peg first told me, it didn't come easy. I had to pretend I was that child, and what would I have done?. Then it came easier.*

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**for discussion...**

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Peggy Lynn's multiple personality (she refers to her "alters") has been an obvious and important part of her survival through life. Though the question of multiplicity and dissociation is a very controversial one, the main point here is that what may serve as an effective escape from trauma early on, becomes a barrier to full recovery in later life.

Like Bev and her friend Sue, Peggy Lynn established surrogate family members and declares that she continues to relate to friends in this way to this day, choosing big brothers, and offering her services as a surrogate mother to friends in need of support.

We are moved by how effective and caring a provider Peggy Lynn is for her grandchildren. Somehow, despite the deprivations of her own childhood, she's managed

to learn about (or from) what she had missed. Her acknowledgement of the benefits she gained at Grandview is a useful reminder that institutions don't have to be horror stories. They can work. At their best, they can provide useful benefit to persons confined or residing within them. So the question is, what would they be like if they were "their best", and what can we do to ensure that they are?

Peggy Lynn's mother-in-law, Marilyn, shows us a simple and direct approach in her support of Peggy Lynn. Its practicality serves as a useful primer for anyone in a caring relationship with an abuse survivor. She listens quietly, respectfully. She believes, unimaginable. She doesn't get frightened, but tries to understand how this could have using her common sense, and by putting herself in Peggy Lynn's shoes.

Are there other useful approaches that families and friends to provide concrete support and institutional abuse?



even when what she hears is happened. She learns by

care to survivors of

#### Chapter 4: Patricia Griffith

Patricia went to Grandview when she was 15. She was charged with incorrigibility after running away from her family home, and then running from 13 group homes in 5 months.

Patricia lived in constant, numbing fear at Grandview. The survival strategy she developed there became a liability after Grandview.

*At Grandview there was so much that was hidden... It was not knowing what was going to happen next that was the worst part of it. I was afraid of what I saw going on... there was always the fear of being the next one to be beaten...just the real fear of drawing attention to myself. I think that was the atmosphere that really allowed me to learn to disappear. I've learned since then it's called psychic numbing.*

Like most of the women in the video tape, Patricia spent long periods in isolation in Grandview's maximum security unit, Churchill House.

*You would be in there, you'd be naked. If you had to urinate or defecate, you had to do it there..The worst part of it was not knowing when they would come back... You lost all track of time.*

Many years after Grandview, Patricia began intensive therapy. She overcame alcohol abuse, suffered an emotional breakdown, put herself in hospital, and courageously began to rebuild her life.

Her relationship with her partner Wayne has been through a healing process as well. He talks about how he has learned to show Patricia the love he feels for her, especially when they both face the consequences of her experiences at Grandview. “Don’t try to fix things,” is his advice to others in loving relationships with survivors of institutional abuse.

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**for discussion...**

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Patricia’s healing path certainly doesn’t search for a personal strength at their as an anchor to therapy

The strength and value only as each of them relationship” that they



combined an effective combination of medication and intensive psychotherapy, but she consider herself crazy. Her therapy isn’t about getting beyond an illness; it’s about her identity. Her experience demonstrates the power to the survivor of identifying a single disposal--in Patricia’s case it was that she knew she had “a wonderful mind”--and using it and recovery.

of the relationship between Patricia and Wayne is very evident. It was gained however, learned how to get past the damage done by Patricia’s abuse, and past the “fantasy imagined was possible at the beginning. They had to get real.

What can be learned from Patricia and Wayne’s experience together that might be helpful to others in a similar situation?

## Chapter 5: Anna

Anna was 13 when she was sent to Grandview. She lived with her large family on a native reserve, and often missed school while babysitting her younger brothers and sisters. The court declared that she was out of control.

Anna’s mother and older sisters spent many years at residential schools for native children.

*I had the feeling that my mother thought it was OK for me to go to Grandview, that it would be similar to being in a residential school... When we were growing up we were on a reserve, and we were all poor. We were all growing up but we were all the same... All of a sudden you’re thrust out into the society and you think there’s something wrong with you.*

Anna, like other aboriginal girls experienced institutional racism.

*I think my experiences with racism and discrimination was prior to going to Grandview, and I think my experience in Grandview compounded the damage that was already there. And it made me feel further humiliation... I felt ashamed of being an Indian.*

Anna spent most of her time at Grandview in segregation. Whenever possible, she developed ties to other native residents.

*I felt isolated from my community, isolated from my family. And I think that's why we kind of gravitated towards each other, the native people. You know that we're all in the same situation, probably feel the same things and are experiencing the same depth of feelings.*

Anna's recovery has come from both her therapy and her growing understanding of her native identity and history. She now works with a native therapist, and is involved in First Nations activities.

*Once I started learning about what it is to be an aboriginal person, it made me happy. I was proud. And it did make a difference. It was exciting...When I'm going to this native therapist, we use the same kind of medicines that natives use in ceremonies. It's useful because it gets us connected to the Creator and within ourselves. And you know the creator's there to help you, to give you strength, and knowing that you're honest and open with yourself.*



It is clear from Anna's story that racism is one of the many forms that institutional abuse usual racist taunts and slurs, she was demeaned and undermined by the negative custodians expressed of her. They "knew" she was bad, and sooner or later, she'd prove is exactly what they said when the police brought her back to Grandview after she'd run back to her family on the reserve, and had re-enrolled in school.)



can take. Besides the expectations which her that they were right. Which away. (She had gone home,

Even the court assumed her upbringing in her native family to be inadequate, interpreting her absence from school as a problem of unmanageability, rather than see the practical need for baby-sitting from an elder daughter in a large family. Anna herself, of course, believed her family life was entirely adequate.

So racism lives out in many ways and at many levels for those who have been institutionalized, for whatever reason. How can we--how should we--respond to this fact?

## Chapter 6: Corina Hayward



Corina was charged with truancy and incorrigibility when she was 13 years old. At the time of our filming, she had just graduated, with an honours degree in sociology from Queen's University. In this film, she provides a personal and well-researched analysis of the social conditions that led to the institutional abuse of the Grandview girls.

She explains that many of the residents had suffered traumatic events earlier in their young lives. Many were deemed incorrigible, or unmanageable because they were acting out previous trauma.

*A lot of us had come from traumatic backgrounds. We had suffered sexual abuse and physical abuse in our home situations. But (they) didn't punish the perpetrator, they punished the child... Training school was about warehousing children that nobody else had an answer for... That's why children never received treatment for abusive situations.*

Schooling was limited. Vocational training was structured around the needs of the institution.

*Girls were taught in the kitchen to cook, or girls did laundry. That's not because these were thought to be training opportunities for these girls coming out on the street...learning to get down on your hands and knees with a bucket and a scrub brush was not because they thought you would leave Grandview and go on to bigger and better things as a scrub woman, but that the place needed to be kept clean.*

The brutal environment at Grandview inspired anger and aggression in a number of the girls, which often continued into their adult lives. Corina is learning to change her perceptions as well as her response.

*...there's people outside in the regular world... that can argue with each other and can say things to each other and it doesn't mean that it's going to escalate into violence. I perceived many situations as a threat, and I started a lot of violence by thinking that.*

Corina is a native Indian woman. The director of the Aboriginal Centre at Queen's University has been very helpful to Corina in her healing process.

*Corina was teaching me a great deal as we went through this. I think what we both learned is that the people who inflicted the pain at Grandview and the society which allows that is terribly out of balance in that they've hurt themselves...and it's not just Corina, not just the other women who went through Grandview that are hurt, but the whole society is hurt with this. So that they're not alone.*

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**points & questions for  
discussion:**

Corina has contributed directly to our deeper understanding of these issues in the thesis she completed at Queen's University. In it she makes several points relating to poverty, class, and gender at Training Schools in Ontario. She shows for example, that while children from all classes were involved in delinquent activities, middle class children were "less likely to come to the attention of the police and the courts, and, if they did, were treated more leniently... five times as many working class children were arrested than middle class and... the training school population was 90% working class."

Many of the Galt/Grandview residents saw themselves as “the lowest of the low”. The courts, the police and the training school system seemed to see these children as showing poor moral character. Corina describes a perception on the part of the courts, the police and many in the community that “delinquent children came from ‘bad’ homes and ‘bad’ homes cause a delinquent child. Bad homes were seen as those with limited financial resources, education and status in the community.”

Many girls were incarcerated in training schools as a form of social control, rather than for criminal behaviour. Studies of training school admissions from 1967 to 1969 show that 75% of females were incarcerated for truancy, unmanageability and sexual impropriety. Girls who came from low income, single parent, substance abusing homes were more likely to be incarcerated than boys coming from the same background. Incarceration for these girls was seen as a form of social control and protection from their own behaviour. As Corina points out, “many working class girls were doing time not for any sort of threat that they posed to society, but for their family situation, the unavailability of community resources and for their ‘unseemly’ behaviour--especially as it pertained to sexual activity.”

The limited education and training programs at Grandview and were rooted in the acceptance and perpetuation of traditional roles for women and girls. Programs that existed reflected the functional requirements of the institution--for cleaning, laundry, cooking and the like. Corina explains that the professional literature at the time “denounces the need for educational opportunities and career preparation programs because girls of training school ‘class’ would regard these as ‘ridiculous past times’ “ and further declared ‘in our culture, the life goal of the female is reached with marriage’.

Sometimes survival skills that worked well in the institutional setting, were detrimental to the survivors later in life. Corina, in a part of her interview edited down in the film, talks about how her post-Grandview relationships suffered because the caution and mistrust that she developed at Grandview often was an obstacle in her adult relationships. Like many Grandview girls, she had learned to hide her emotional needs and desires as well as her pain and vulnerability. This repression often caused those who wished to be closer to her in adult life to see her as cold and uncaring. She has had to work hard to get past this barrier in an effort to connect with friends, and most especially, with her teenage daughter.

## **Chapter 7: Eleanor Robinson**

Eleanor is 75 years old. She was sent to the Galt Training School in 1937 at age 15. She is the oldest of the Grandview Survivors Support Group and represents the long history of girls/women who were incarcerated and traumatized at Grandview.

Eleanor explains that when they were children, at age 8 and 7, she and her sister Isobel were ‘sold’ to her father’s brothers and sisters for \$50. So like a number of the Grandview survivors, Eleanor’s feelings of worthlessness began at a early age.

*My aunt said, you weren’t worth fifty cents, let alone fifty dollars, and that was the first time I realized they had given my mother money for us kids.*

When she was 15, a couple of young men her father had brought home invited Eleanor on a trip to Port Hope to see the electric lights. She did not realize that their car was stolen, and was caught and arrested, while the others escaped. She was sentenced to the Galt Training School.

Eleanor experienced abuse while at Galt, and was traumatized by the suffering of the others.

*“I heard the girls in there screaming when they were getting strapped. I still wake up in the middle of the night because I can hear them screaming. I’m still crying when I wake up, and all that happened 60 years ago.”*

When she was finally allowed to leave the Training School, Eleanor felt she was labeled and this belief limited her options and choices throughout her life. Shortly after leaving Galt for instance, Eleanor met a young man while working in a factory.

*I fell in love. But I was a convict on parole. He told me he was going to become a policeman. Right away, I knew that I would never even be able to associate with him because I would be dragging him down.*

*...We were sub-culture.*

Eleanor entered into a long and unhappy marriage with a man 21 years her senior. Each time they argued, her husband would refer to Eleanor as the “Galt Training School whore”.

Her adult son, David, who is determined that the harm done to Eleanor will not be passed down, has devoted much of his time and energy to working with his mother to sort out their family history. He was a main support to her through the Grandview investigation and adjudication process and is committed to now providing the care she missed for so much of her life.

*I’ve always been interested in what happened to this family. There’s some things that weren’t right in it...There needed some healing to be done even within myself, and the only way to find that is you’ve got to find out the story...You put yourself in her position and that’s a heck of an ordeal to go through for the length of time it went on. And I couldn’t picture growing up with absolutely no love or anybody caring about you. Like, how do you grow up? If you don’t get love, how can you give it?*

When the Grandview investigation made the front pages of the local press, David helped Eleanor to get involved with other Grandview survivors. Having the chance to talk openly about her days at Galt, to be heard and believed was very healing for Eleanor. She has played an important role for other younger survivors.

*It was like getting out of a sauna. I mean you get cleansed. I had never felt so good in all my life. I walked out of there six feet in the air... All those girls loved me because I was like a mother to them. I was the oldest one there. And they said, ‘Eleanor, up until the time we had the rally, they did not listen to us... It needed somebody that went there and give them hell.’*

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**for discussion...**

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The terrible price that Eleanor paid for being remanded to the Galt Training School was to come away from that place feeling unworthy and incapable of a loving relationship with a good man. Galt/Grandview served only to reinforce the low self-esteem Eleanor had developed in childhood and denied her a perception of any choice that might be available to her as an adult.

It wasn't until 55 years later, with her decision to take personal action to address the wrongs done to her as a child, that Eleanor finally found the way out of her victimization.

David, her son, demonstrates again the powerful effect of committed family support to the survivors of abuse. And in this case, we see that children of survivors can take an active part themselves in purging the sense of victimization from the family. David assumed an participation for his own sake, not just for Eleanor.

A letter from the Filmmaker:

On reflecting on the making of *Until Someone Listens*, I realize there are additional comments and experiences that may help you as you watch the film.

As in any film-making process, our workgroup agonized about deleting good material from the finished film. We knew that many sequences would have to be sacrificed in the interests of time, but agreed that some deserved a place in this accompanying book. These have been noted where the women's stories are summarized. We have added "points & questions" relating to each chapter to help you with your use of the film, and some of the deleted sequences are described there.

On a personal note, I must share my experience of something that was referred to briefly earlier in the book. When we were discussing material to be included here, Joan Headley, one of the GSSG representatives in our workgroup, urged me to include a section on "vicarious traumatization". I was not as attentive as I should have been, probably because I didn't understand the term. Big mistake. Had I understood the concept better, I might have helped myself more as I travelled the Grandview road to make the film.

Let me put it this way. It hurts to hear about the pain and suffering of incarcerated and brutalized children. Those who advocate on their behalf, who support them in their healing, and who witness their pain and recovery, expose themselves to rage and grief as well. For me, it was a struggle to keep my boundaries helpfully in place. My world darkened with the hurt the women revealed to me and it was often hard to maintain a balance between empathy and despair.

To keep my own balance, I needed to talk about the experience, while respecting the survivors' confidentiality. I relied on the support of the work group, my partner, and my trusty therapist and I'm sure that I was "high maintenance" for all of them. Only after completing the film did I discover and read the literature on vicarious traumatization. I would encourage those of you who support and care for institutional abuse survivors to help yourselves sooner than I did.

A last word. In making this document, I chose to take an intense, and systematic look at the institutional abuse of children. Rather than deal only with "who did what to whom", I wanted to reveal the systemic brutalization that can, and still does, happen in some institutional settings. I came to see that when people with power hurt those in their care, and when others who are responsible for the system turn a blind eye, then everyone in that institution is brutalized and dehumanized. Many institutions become closed systems for inmates and staff. Many institutions become closed to the communities of which they are apart. But none of us can afford to lose our humanity by ignoring the hurt done to others. I have come to believe, in making the film, that care is what keeps us connected to our own hearts and minds, and to each other.

*Until Someone Listens* is the result of a collective effort. The Grandview survivors have been generous and wise. The staff of the Ministry of the Attorney General, who are responsible for programs that deal with institutional abuse and survivors, have been consistently helpful and supportive. We had many fine, intense discussions, and shared good laughter and tears.

It has been an honour to bring you this film.

Laura Sky  
Producer/Director

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