

March 2, 2017

RE: Submission to Law Amendments Committee re: "Bill 59, An Act Respecting Accessibility in Nova Scotia"

Submitted by Trudy Bengivenni in collaboration with: **Rachel Marie Blinn, Hantford Boudreau, Amanda Comeau, Bobby Comeau, Glendon d'Entremont, Jon Graham, Nancy Hodge, Paul Reginal Newell, Simone Robichaud, Beverly Ann Robicheau, June Saulnier, Marilyn Smith, Marcia Surette, Elise Thibodeau, Jody Thibodeau and Paul Wyman.**

It is more than gratifying to have access to such a profound privilege of citizenship in my home province. To actually be welcome to address the Law Amendments Committee on any Bill before it passes into law is a phenomenal gesture, fostering the perpetuation of a civil and democratic society. I have never been prouder to be a Nova Scotian!

In my various roles as a community, environmental and primary health advocate, I have considerable experience organizing and delivering public consultations across a wide spectrum of community, regional, provincial and federal forums. (please see Appendix 1: BACKGROUND PROFILE).

MAJOR KUDOS to the NS Law Amendments Committee for delaying passage of Bill 59 until public consultation is conducted with those citizens who will be most impacted by its provisions. I also greatly admire and thank the web of advocacy and helping organizations working toward full social inclusion for all citizens, regardless of their race, gender, religion, country of origin or physical/mental or intellectual status. I'm going to present in a rather unorthodox narrative style, because I consider it the best way to address the disability issues that a group of my dearest friends have revealed to me—not by complaining to me but from my being witness to what they endure on a daily basis.

Motivated by the impressive statement of the Law Amendments Committee that Bill 59 could not advance to passage until widespread public consultation is held with those persons who will be most impacted by the provisions of this Act, I decided to interview my friends; who are my

collaborators in this process. They happen to live in group homes and/or attend l'Atelier de Clare, a workshop facility under the auspices of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL).

Many people have the misguided notion that intellectually challenged adults have the minds of children. Trust me, they are not children and many are coming from circumstances that would make any one of us fall to our knees. And generally, the residences, especially in rural communities like ours, support a mixed population of varied ages. But I have never represented a group of people with as much inspired passion as the group whose words I carry here today. I can no longer refer to them as "clients" or residents; they are my beloved friends. And they were profoundly moved when I told them that their words will be among the most important ones the government will see and hear; and that they will help make the world a safer, better place for many others. Those who could stand did. And the wheelchair users formed a circle and gave each other and me high five! They regard helping others as the most highly valued activity they perform, and I can think of no finer people to represent in the hallowed chambers of Province House than them.

The Vision of the CACL is to ensure that the "Rights to equality, self-determination, full citizenship, valued recognition and respect from others are legally recognized and assured for all people with intellectual disabilities."

See: <http://www.cacl.ca/area/equality-rights>

The week after I joined the Board of Directors of l'Atelier and la Maison Jérôme group home back in 2012, I was invited by Executive Director, Kathleen Jacques, to attend a ceremony honouring the clients who had successfully completed a computer literacy course. An official from the Dept. of Education in Halifax was in attendance to pass out certificates, and he spoke about his own challenges growing up with a speech impediment and struggling to learn how to read. He spoke very highly of the literacy program being delivered, with much support from l'Atelier staff, by a brilliant young teacher from the Digby Area Learning Association (DALA). She told me a while later that she calls l'Atelier her "happy place."

When it was my turn to speak, I walked over and faced the group of 25 beaming people, proudly holding their freshly minted achievement certificates. As I made eye contact with the happy group seated before me, the words I had planned to say evaporated as I felt a surge of love and

compassion coming at me from them. I stepped back and put both hands over my heart, and said, "OH MY! I have never been welcomed so lovingly and kindly by any group I've ever spoken to."

I stepped toward them and took my glasses off, and told them that I am legally blind without my glasses, due to a brain injury to my visual cortex at birth (and I tapped it to show them where it is). I have poor balance and "can't chew gum and walk a straight line." None of them laughed. Their full attention was riveted on me and what I was saying. I knew four of them already, and looked at each of the four in turn, telling Bobby that I can't hit a nail with a hammer like he can; to Jody that I can't draw and paint birds as beautifully as he can; to Nancy that I can't do the precise needlepoint ornaments she enjoys making. And to June, who taught me her highly evolved and compelling interview style.

I told them that everyone has limitations that they need help to overcome or live with, and that I'd like to get to know each of them one on one, and learn about their interests, hobbies and what they do in their spare time. I knew there was a huge celebration cake waiting, so I ended with a promise that I'd come back the following day, and for many days after! AND I HAVE! I started to walk away, but they remained seated. So I turned back and asked if they had any questions. They looked at each other in silence then one by one they came to introduce themselves to me. After the sixth one came forward, I announced that I wanted to go eat cake with them. I did not leave the building until I had greeted each and every one of them, ONE ON ONE. Five years later our bond has become even stronger. I cannot measure the value of the learning and life skills these amazing people have bestowed upon me.

I now recoil at the widespread practice of defining persons with disabilities, especially those requiring long-term residential support, solely by their identified incapacities. Who among us would choose to go though life being defined only by our limitations? What kind of outcome would you expect for yourself under such a staggering burden? That is why I have chosen to present in this narrative style. My intention is that you will see the potential social and personal capital of persons who have been invisible and/or denigrated for far too long! And please don't fall prey to the misguided and clichéd charitable perspective that accommodating PWDs is the 'right' thing to do, while cringing inwardly in their presence. Challenge your assumptions and see what happens when you shed the 'us and them'

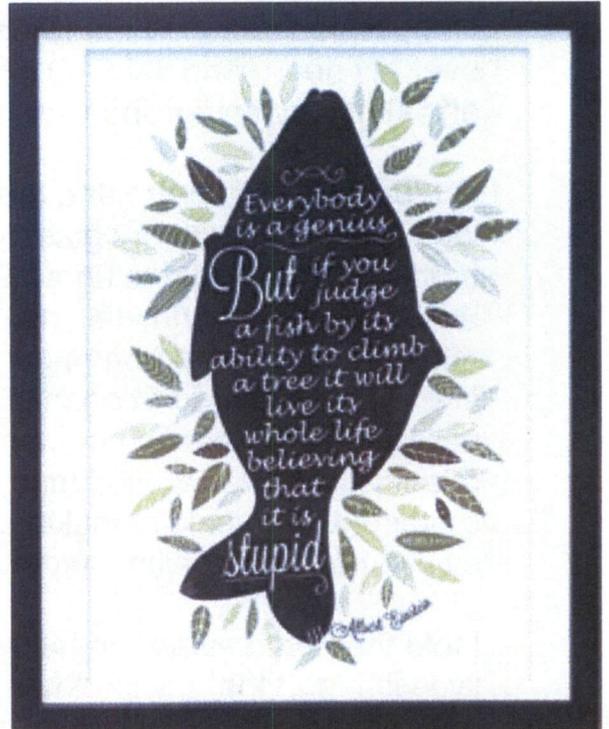
illusion. Einstein failed basic high school Math, and was labeled as learning disabled. His parents were advised to send him to a trade school to become a plumber.

The following feedback came from meetings and interviews I conducted at l'Atelier de Clare and two group homes, la Maison Jérôme and La Maison Coucher du Soleil from Feb. 5 to 9th, 2017.

I composed two basic questions to motivate the respondents after they asked me what they should say. This is not an every day experience for them or for me. The staff at all three sites graciously assisted me.

1. What activities do you enjoy doing at the workshop and/or at your residence?
2. What would you like to have in your life that you do not have now?

And the following quotes are the result of that consultation.



February 9, 2017

Submission to the NS LAW AMENDMENTS COMMITTEE re:  
"THE NOVA SCOTIA ACCESSIBILITY ACT"

"I authorize my friend Trudy Bengivenni to share my words and/or photograph with the NS Law Amendments Committee, and wish to have my comments entered into the permanent records of this proceeding."

*Hantford Boudreau*  
Hantford Boudreau

*Rachel Blinn - Rachel B*

*Jody Thibodeau - Jody Thibodeau*

*Simone Robitaille - Simone*

*Jane Saultier - Julie*

*Clyde Desrosiers*

*Amanda Comeau*

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X BOBBY COMEAU

JUNE

June Sauthier

X Elise Thibodeau

Rachel

Rachel Blinn

Beverly ANN Robicheau

Glendon

Marcia Surette

Paul Ray

Harrell

Paul Wynn

|

RACHEL MARIE BLINN: (smiling in her favourite blue sweater)



"I like to do my scrapbook, and I shred paper at my work; lots of paper that people pay to have shredded. I really like that to do that! I like to go visit my mother, and will go this weekend. My mother can't talk anymore. But I still love to go see her.

I learned how to read this year and I go to the library with my friends to get books. I love reading! I also love to go bowling but I'm not in the Special Olympics.

My favourite thing is to go shopping. I like Frenchy's and bought a nice blue blouse there. I really like to go to Tim Horton's with Trudy and Kathy. I have yogurt with fruit. And I also like to go to Robin's for coffee. We sometimes go to the Chinese restaurant in Digby, but not so much anymore."

## HANTFORD BOUDREAU:

"I really enjoy going to see my Mom and my girlfriend Nancy. I also enjoy going downtown to Saulnierville We have to pay for some of our outings now ...50¢ per kilometre. So it costs me \$11.50 round trip to go to Saulnierville to visit my fiancée Nancy. Sometime the rides are free, paid for by the government...Community Services. It used to be four times per month, but now it is only twice a month and I have to pay for the other two rides since Community Services cut their transportation budget.

Four times a year we get to go to Yarmouth and Digby (approx. 40 to 45 minutes from Clare). There's one car to Digby and two to Yarmouth for whoever wants to go. We have to pay \$55 roundtrip for these trips. I don't like the idea of money coming out of our wallets and "comfort allowance" (\$115/month), and income from the work I do either at the workshop or my residence (\$25 /week), and our clothing allowance.

I don't mind contributing to the cost of food and rent, and living expenses. But I would really like to manage my own money. And I would like to have some help to do that to make sure I'm doing it right.

I enjoy going to the library every two weeks. We can keep the books for three weeks. I really enjoy reading a lot, and also enjoy



having computer access. The Bible is somewhat along the line of my reading taste; and I also enjoy horror stories, science fiction, etc.

I like to walk for exercise in the fresh air. I also like to "do steps," counting my steps walking and also using the Stepercizer machine at my residence. We (me and my friends) like to walk in the P'tit Bois (Little Forest) behind the University.

**RECOMMENDATION FROM HANTFORD BOUDREAU:**

**'WE NEED A CROSSWALK (ON HWY 1) FROM THE BOTTOM OF LA MAISON JEROME DRIVEWAY TO THE ST. MARY'S CHURCH PARKING LOT TO GET TO L'ATELIER SAFELY!'**

Some of my friends walk both ways every day except when it's raining or snowing. And my wheelchair user friends cross there often too. Clyde goes out a lot and sometimes he doesn't get back till after dark. It's very dangerous for him to cross there. It's a high traffic area. I only attend the reading and Math classes at l'Atelier with Sheri McNeil, the teacher who comes from DALA (Digby Area Learning Association) Sheri is totally awesome and everybody enjoys her classes a lot.

What would I like to have in my life that I don't have now?

More money! (joke). My deepest wish is that I would like to live with the love of my life, Nancy! And I would like us to live in our own place. I would also like to manage my own money. And would also like to have someone help me to manage my money."

AMANDA COMEAU:

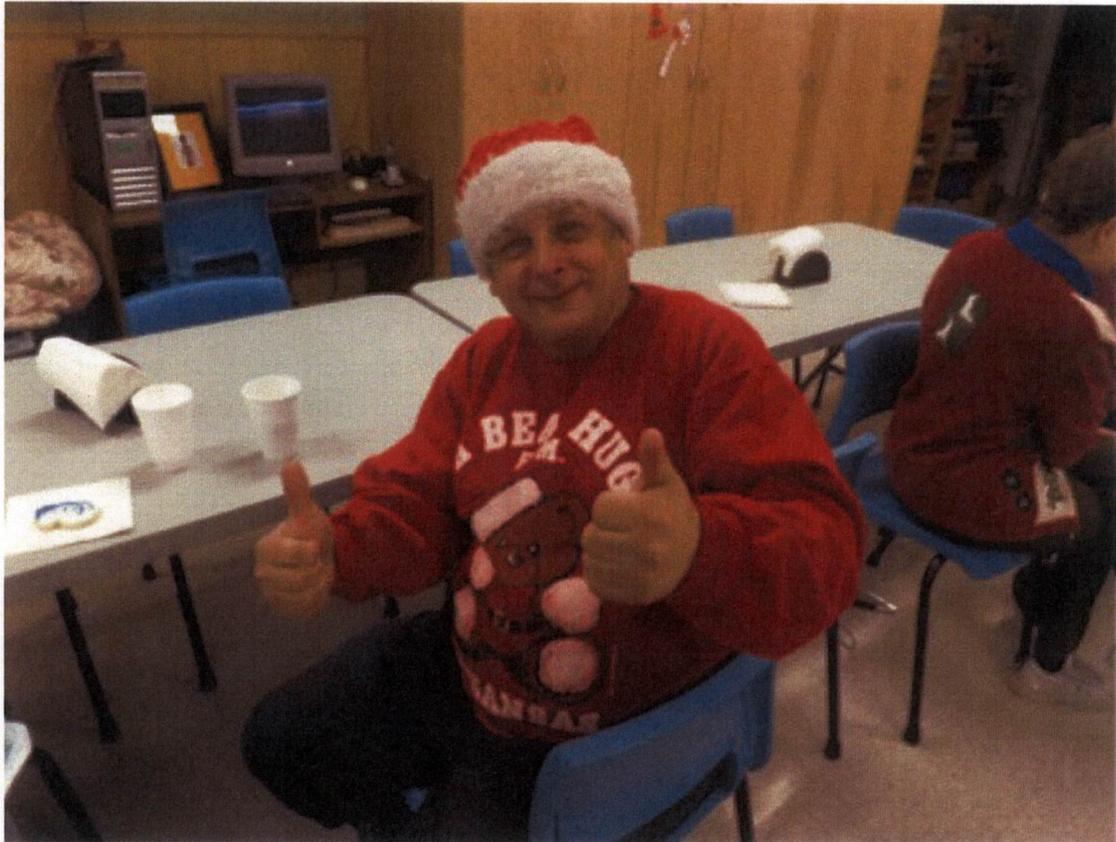
“Why don’t we clean up the whole world! And keep it clean and be healthy.  
To live our life and help one another.

That is my message ...”



## BOBBY COMEAU:

I really enjoy working here at l'Atelier, and I have lots of friends. I don't live in a residence. The money is good (\$25 /week) and sometimes I help my special needs friends who have problems getting on the Transport bus. I push their wheelchairs at other places too, if need be.



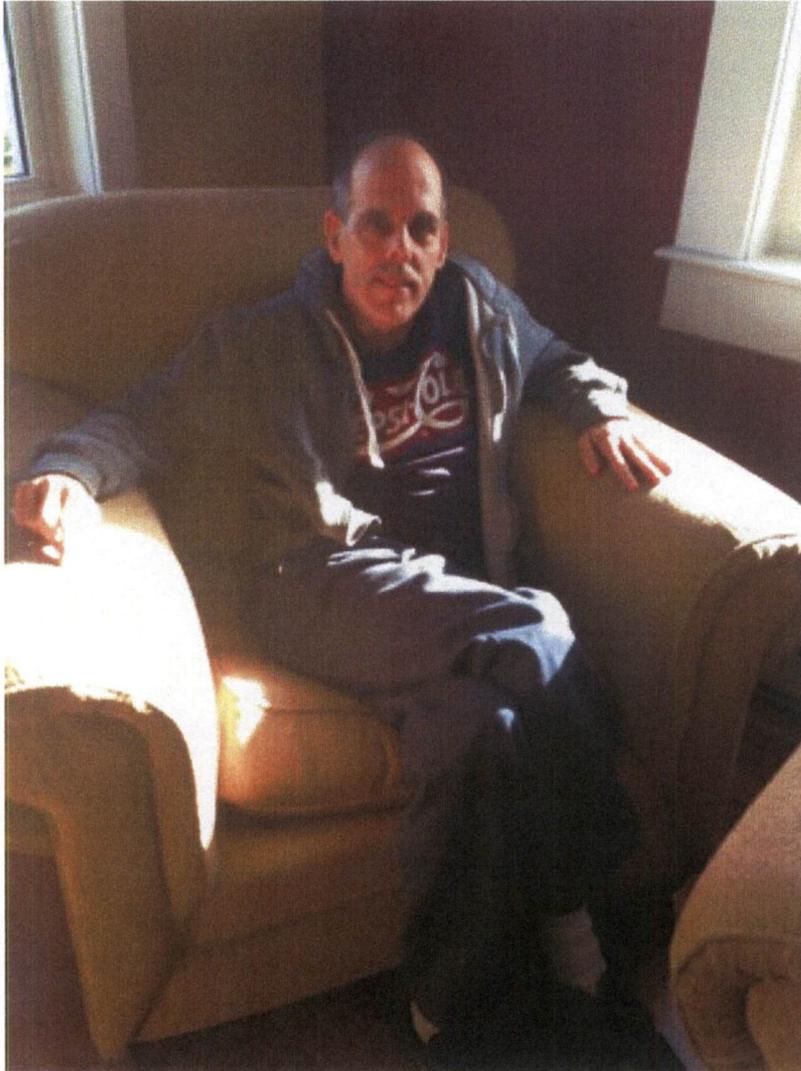
I really like going on outings. Sometimes I help pay my way but other times it's free. I go bowling and I'm in the Special Olympics. I do three sports: Bowling, Curling and Bocci. I'm quite active in those three sports. I love professional hockey more than any other sport.

I'm a third Degree Knight in the Knights of Columbus. I'm also into the Cursillo movement at St. Pat's Church in Digby. I attend "Ultreyu" at the Church in Digby on every third Friday of the month from 7:30 till 9 o'clock. I don't really want to do anything else than what I do now. I'm very busy and I'm very happy!"

## GLENDON d'ENTREMONT

"I like to read. I like magazines and books about Princess Diana.

I go visit my family in Pubnico sometimes and I like to play Bowling on the iPad.



I work doing sanding wood but not downstairs in the woodworking shop. I do it upstairs sitting on my favourite chair.

I exercise and like to use the exercise machines. I also like to do puzzles. My favourite puzzle is the Super Heroes one."

JON GRAHAM (whose residence is on the shore of St. Mary's Bay):

JON GRAHAM



## NANCY HODGE:

Even though I wish I could live with my fiancé Hantford Boudreau, I also love being here at the Maison Coucher with my friends. The food is great and I'm very picky about what I eat. I enjoy going shopping and going on other outings, or just driving around Clare. And the staff here is very nice.

I used to work in the kitchen washing dishes at the Senior's home. I go sewing at l'Atelier and then I go to Cottage Celeste (a senior residence) to do things for the seniors there. On Thursdays I go to Au Logis, another home for seniors. I do all of this work as a volunteer without pay. Cindy and June work there with me and we all travel together. We'e all volunteers.

I get up at 6:25, shower, have breakfast with my friends and get a ride on the Transport de Clare bus which arrives at l'Atelier at 8:30. I sometimes don't get home till 6:00 pm.

We have to save money for a whole year to spend one night at our favourite Inn a short distance from where I live.

The Transport drives us there for free. Hants lives further away, and has to pay sometimes if he wants to visit me unless someone brings him. I like saving money and would like to have control over my own money. My special dream is that me and Hants could save enough to go to PEI together. But I mostly wish that we could just have our own place and live together."



PAUL REGINAL NEWELL:

"i do puzzles and read a little bit, but not much though. I have problems reading because of the brain tumours (thirteen or fourteen) that injured my optic nerve. One was right on my optic nerve!

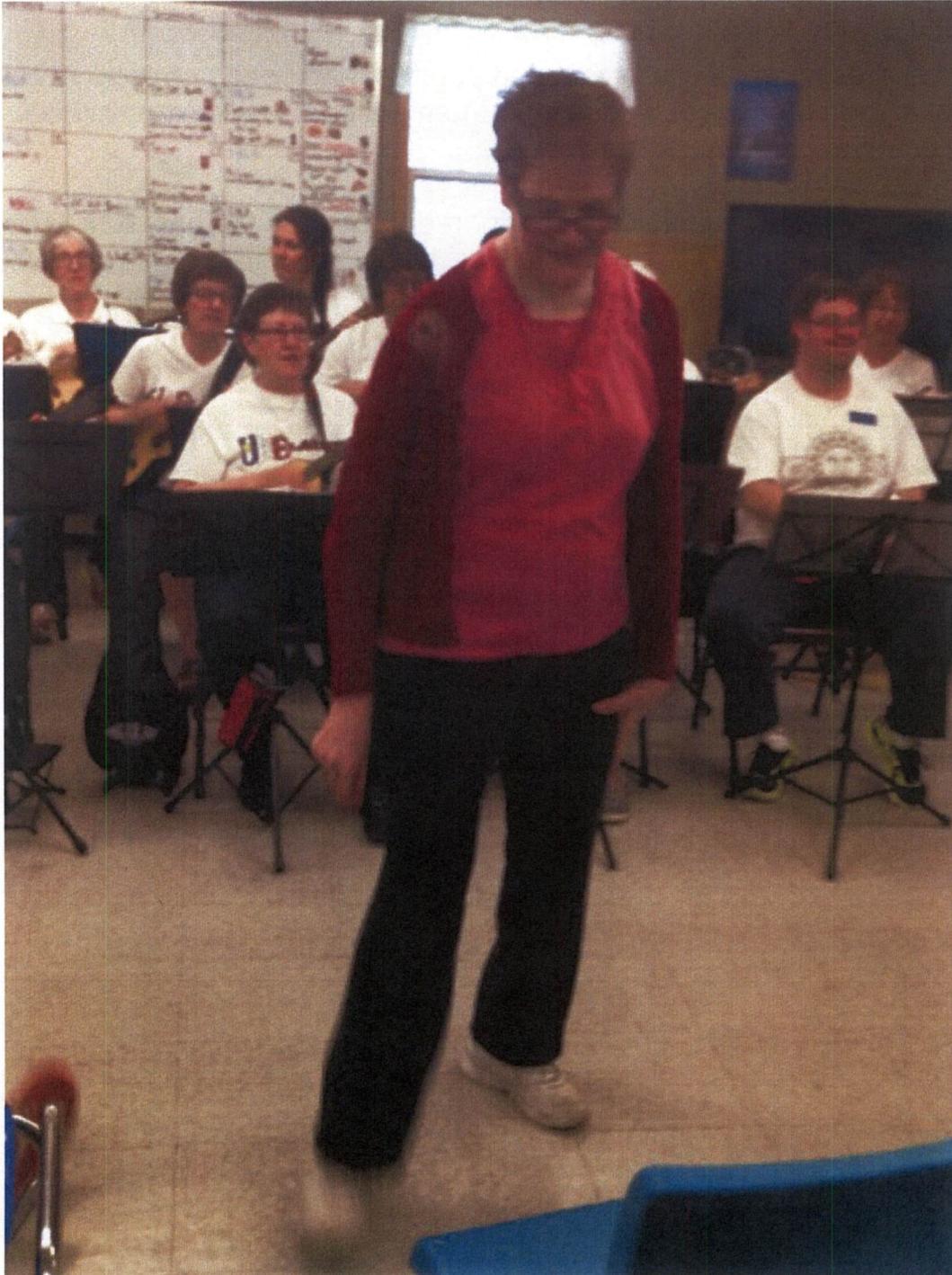
Very good staff here.They look after me very well; and I can sometimes be a pain in the "a-s-s," hahaha!

I'm a very fussy eater. I like meat and potatoes; and beef, not pork. Potato pancakes and raw carrots; I can't eat them cooked. I really enjoy socializing with my friends here, at my residence.

If I could have any wish, it would be for me to have my mother back in my life, but she's not in my life anymore. Me and my mother always got along. My mother loves me and I love her very much."

**SIMONE ROBICHAUD:**

I like to write and do puzzles. I also enjoy going on outings and love to go Bowling. I also love music and enjoy dancing when "the Ukeladies" come to play for us at l'Atelier."



**BEVERLY ANN ROBICHEAU:**

I like living here but I don't like the doctor's care. The needle makes me sick and it slows down my kidneys. I had no way to travel and couldn't afford to get to Annapolis Royal to see a lawyer.

So I'm sitting on a rocking chair doing nothing ... but thinking. My brain is always in use. A psychiatrist from India once told me I wasn't too bright, so I said, "Thanks a lot ...same to you!"

What would I like to have in my life? I would like to live on my own again in a big house with all my cats and dogs and have lots of money. And I would like to manage my money myself."



The Judge or The Brat?

**JUNE SAULNIER:**

"I like to work in the workshop sanding wood. I'm really good at doing that. I sometimes do it upstairs too. I like to paint and I really like to go out with my friends. I work to help the old ladies at Au Logis in Meteghan. I clean the bathrooms there. I get a ride whenever I go there to work, and I enjoy that a lot.

I love to play cards at the workshop. I also love to colour and walk outside,



but only in the summer. And I love jewelry! I go swimming at the University pool but not in the winter. I like to bake and make cookies once in a while."

**MARILYN SMITH:**

I watch television a lot and talk with my friends. And I like it when my sister Annie comes down to see me on Sundays. And I like being here because it's quiet and people here are kind.

I don't get outside very much. I smoke and the staff rolls cigarettes for me. It makes me feel good when I smoke.

What would I like in my life that I don't have now? I want a old man!  
{I told Marilyn, who's a strikingly beautiful 84-year-old, that she's so youthful looking that she could probably snag a much younger man.}  
She leaned out of her chair and got as close to my face as she could politely manage, and eagerly asked, "Can you get me one!"



MARCIA SURETTE:

"I haven't been back to Pubnico since my favourite cousin passed away at the age of 95. Her daughter lived in the same house and used to drive her mother here to visit me. My boyfriend, Maurice, has lived here for seven years and I really like that! He has his own room, though, but we spend a lot of time together.

One of my favourite hobbies is watching the tv three-quarters of the day with my boyfriend and laughing at his jokes. *'Tu ne enconte de bonne, Maurice!'* *'You're telling us some good ones, Maurice!'* I go to the workshop twice a week. My job is to clean the kitchen but that is the only work I do there. After I finish with the kitchen, I enjoy playing word search games and talking with my friends.

Two things I like here at my residence are eating and having the staff put nail polish on for me. I love getting presents when they come around at Christmastime and birthdays.

My favourite supper is rappie pie and I like the one from Pubnico the best because it has a very high crust and isn't too soft. I also like to have pop and potato chips ,and the staff gives them to me only twice a week because I have kidney trouble. I really love cheese burgers and french fries. When I go to the Red Cap Restaurant in Pubnico I love to eat their chicken burger with French fries and gravy. And I buy lottery tickets because I want to win \$22 million dollars.

NOTE: I choose to speak in English because I know that Trudy doesn't understand French very well."

ELISE THIBODEAU: (wearing her red sneakers and beautiful smile)



“I work at the cafeteria at the University and I am a volunteer. I go on the Tim Horton’s run and bring the coffee to places {in the community}. I take the orders and bring them to where the people are.

I like to work in the kitchen and swim at the Université Ste-Anne pool.

I have two brothers and one of them is having a birthday tomorrow. I love being at l’Atelier with my friends and have fun here every day.”

JODY THIBODEAU: (In his striped T-shirt enjoying Chinese food in Digby)

"I love painting more than anything else I do! I do some Bob Ross paintings and I like to paint birds. I put my own price tags on them and I I have sold



many. I save my money from the paintings I sell and now have bought a complete set of "WWE Raw" seasons 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2007. And "Smack Down" complete 2000 season. And WCW Monday Night 1996. I also just bought a Blue Ray player so I can watch stuff in my room where there's privacy.



I like going on all the outings to restaurants and shopping. I play in the Winter and Summer Special Olympics. I have friends like Bobby Comeau and Paul Wyman and Joey Saulnier and Timothy Comeau and Clyde Deveau. Trudy is my good friend too, and likes to buy my bird paintings."

PAUL WYMAN: (looking dapper in his green jacket)

"I like to exercise with the machines and also with ordinary dumbbells. I read the newspapers every day and also like novels (war, history and mystery novels.) At l'Atelier I paint in the woodworking shop but also do fine art paintings of outdoor scenes, fishing boats, seascapes and landscapes.

Since I reached retirement age, I don't go downstairs to the woodworking shop as often as I used to. I spend most of my time upstairs now.

I really enjoy Sheri McNeil's reading and Math classes. She is easy to get along with, very friendly and a very good teacher. We all get our share of input time with her.

I enjoy going on trips that are organized by my residence's staff. I



especially like to go to Greenwood and Port Royal. I also enjoy shorter outings to Digby.

I need more money than that I get now. When I go to Clarence's Shopping Mart it costs me \$2.00 or \$3.00 to go a mile up the road. I can't walk that far because I have lung trouble. I don't think its fair at all that Community Services cut the budget for transportation. We now have less income from lost work opportunities, and fewer opportunities for socializing outside our

residence. We can't purchase anything "extra" for ourselves because it all goes on necessities. I don't even know how much money I get. They haven't told me yet. I have no control over my own money, and have to pay for my "rent" and food. I don't know if that's going to change for the better or worse, but I don't like not knowing such an important thing as how much money I have and who is controlling it."

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*I want to thank all my brave friends who took a giant leap of faith to entrust their dreams as well as their words to me. I consider this task a sacred duty and honoured privilege. 🙏*

"We can love completely what we cannot completely understand."

~ Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

"Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs."

~ Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

## APPENDIX 1

March 1, 2016

BACKGROUND PROFILE: Trudy Bengivenni  
Vice President, Le Transport de Clare Society  
(2008 - 2017)



I graduated from McGill University in 1972 with a B.Arts (English Literature). I lived in Montreal for four years after graduation and worked for two English language publications: The Official Hotel & Resort Guide and Readers Digest Canada prior to returning to my home province of Nova Scotia in 1976.

My husband and I moved to Clare with our four young children in 1979, and have made it our chosen home ever since. From 1985 onward, I have been involved in multi-sectoral community development activities, and have been an outspoken advocate for environmental stewardship, community empowerment and Population Health.

I have been involved with le Transport de Clare in various capacities since its inception in 1996. I was a founding member (1985 to 2006) and Past President of Enviro Clare; founding member (1995 - 2004) and Past Chair of the Clare Community Health Board; member of the NS Public Health "Partners for Progress Regional Working Group (1997-2005); Board member of l'Atelier de Clare and la Maison Jérôme (2011-2013); and others. I also worked full-time (1985-2003) for the Clare Shopper, a community advertising tabloid.

Over the years I have researched, compiled documentation, organized and contributed written and/or oral submissions to many public community consultations, on behalf of the organizations I belonged to or as an invested citizen. I drafted the first Clare Community Health Board Community Health Plan (1997); assumed responsibility for the official Enviro-Clare response to the (2000-2005) Federal-Provincial Environmental Review of the proposed White Point Quarry and Marine Terminal on Digby Neck; submitted to the Minister's Task Force on Regionalized Health Care in N.S. (1999); Submitted to the 2012 Nova Scotia Electoral Boundary Commission; provided research and writing support to the Dissenting Member of the Electoral Boundary Commission and organized and co-facilitated the 2013 All Candidates Forum on the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons With Disabilities held at l'Université Ste-Anne in Church Point, SW Nova Scotia.