

#### Audio 4 – Deinstitutionalization, Parkdale and PARC

Right around the time that deinstitutionalization happened, we had a bunch of these homes that were left almost vacant and because people were leaving them they were moving to the suburbs. Even those building on Jameson etc. which were set up to be like the new modernism, were only part of the answer and they were built in the 50s and even they were starting to lose their lustre. So everyone was moving to the suburbs and so there was a high vacancy rate and houses were very cheap to buy and so enterprising people bought them, put a bunch of locks on the doors and set to renting them out. No standards, but that's what was happening. At the very time that deinstitutionalization was going on people said "Hey, well, I can become a boarding room operator and so people set up little homes for special care, or whatever. People were living 5 to a room. So, Pat Capone, her first real book was "Upstairs in the Crazy House" and she talks about a boarding home that she lived in, Shanon Court, and the conditions were pretty deplorable. That was the standard.

So PARC began, as a response to, you've got all these adults living in these rooming houses and boarding homes. If you are living 5 to a room, you are probably not going to stay in your room, so you're gonna end up then on the streets, so volunteers and other people said, "we gotta do something" so they proposed PARC. And PARC opened a few years later as a response, a place for people to go, that was the living room to thousands piece, because people didn't have a place to go. As soon as people came to PARC, they started to talk about where they lived and soon as they started to talk about where they lived, we were going, "Holy shit. That sounds terrible!" and so you can imagine that workers would immediately start to say, "Well, you know, we gotta do something about that." And so Bob started, he can give you some pretty good historical context because he worked at Archway, but he did a lot of his work in the boarding homes and he saw all of these terrible places. So PARC members' experience and PARC's, kinda role was really to reflect and comment on what members would tell us about their lives.

So you have these overlaying issues because housing is a foundational piece of your life, if you don't have a place to live, whether it's home or not. So the first thing you need to do... if you look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, I need shelter, I need food and of course we constantly struggling with the fact that if you are poor, you can afford one of the two but often you can't afford both so you can afford shelter, if it's non affordable it's gonna be... so there is rent geared to income housing and then there is affordable. We have have a lot of private market affordable housing in Parkdale, which means that it's a little cheaper than the rest of

the market, it's still, probably 80% of someone's ODSP cheque. It's affordable, but they've only got one hundred bucks left for everything else right? So then they don't have enough left for food, so you start to realize, it's not just housing, although housing is key, but then from there, what's next? Well food, right? And then from there, social purpose, like meaningful engagement, having a connection, not feeling villified or demonized. So, you know, because people who are different, how well are they welcomed by a community? How well are they supported by a community? Are they shunned, or are they kind of "no that's so and so" and we know them and you actually have a relationship with them.

So there's this... these concentric circles of need and demand that have led to what PARC does. So we started off very small place, housing activism, then you know, actually then realizing once we got the building renovated, well actually we have to provide housing, we can't not... cause there was a big debate of whether we should every provide housing because we couldn't provide enough for everybody. Though, it was like, well, that shouldn't be... we should provide some for some and we should learn about that. Because of course, I think what's really important about that is, that decision, which was really quite a pivotal one for the organization, it then led us to say, when we proposed Edmond's place, we had a track record, we say, "well we have done this for a number of years." And it also meant for the wider community, we could say, you know, we could start to point fingers and say, "well we do it.'

And then that led us to other issues around poverty and then to food security and now we are even a broader one which is really about social inclusion. Because as gentrification starts, continues, the pressure is really being felt, is that we know that without mechanisms to prevent exclusion based on just... financial exclusion etc. that PARC will lose its vibrancy but also some key members of its community. So we now need to look at, from a community development point of view, of like ok, we need to have a much wider sphere of influence, we can't just... so it's that we've now broadened again to say, we actually need to hold that conversation within the neighbourhood about who lives here and how, who has the right to be here and how do we start to talk about making sure that people aren't dislocated due to economic factors? How do we make sure that affordable housing, supportive housing? How do we talk about the kind of neighbourhood we would like to continue to have, right?