

Perry Kinkaide,
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I first learned of Wolf Wolfensberger in 1972. I was a recent graduate with a PhD in Brain Research from the University of Alberta. I had concluded that despite the degree, that I was not an academic. I was seeking something more meaningful with few options. I was fortunate to have a mentor in Dr. J.P Das at the University of Alberta who simply told me upon graduating, "Perry you have been buried in the lab fiddling with brain cells. You are now free, with the globe before you. Lift up your head and fly." Dr. Das hired me to help develop "The Mental Retardation Research Institute". My first task was to develop a parent-practical journal. That led me to an interview that changed my life. At the time the Alberta Government was keen to develop community services alternatives to the province's sole institution. I met the Alberta Government's Program Director, Marcel Arcand, who suggested I read Dr. Wolfenberger's recently released book Normalization. I did and was mystified as I had no idea that civilization had bypassed a significant portion of the population for whom "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", didn't apply.

My radicalization starting in 1972 had just begun. A cause found. The Program Director – sensing my enthusiasm or maybe it was my naivete, asked me to write a paper on what I would do if hired as Coordinator of Services for the Handicapped. I still have it. The paper I think earned me the job. Soon after I was invited to visit the National Institute of Mental Retardation (NIMR) in Toronto by Allan Roher, it's Director. He asked me to write a paper on leadership. Since lost. But I recall highlighting that leaders could be born but more often rose in response to specific situations.

The visit to NIMR in 1973 featured several days of "radicalization", though that was not what it was called. We were exposed to PASS and an inspired and inspiring week of Wolf. The PASS Conference wrapped up with a video of Geraldo Rivera's tour of Willowbrook on Staten Island – an institution for thousands. The video concluded with a phrase I have never forgotten, "I showed you what it looked like. You've heard what it sounded like. But I can't tell you what it smelled like." I was ready but knowing that Wolf distrusted professionals for all that they had done - or not done, I wanted his attention. I approached him in admiration to say thank you for the guidance and to assure him that "I could be trusted." He was at the top of an ascending staircase at NIMR when I muttered my promise. He turn, starred at me and said, "You'll be tested!" That was it. He turned and left.

Over the following years through 1981 the Edmonton Region embraced the many challenges, often confronted about change by anxious parents and teachers, neighbourhoods and schools, doctors and “yes” even priests, as we went about advocating for Normalization. Community agencies were engaged to develop a supporting service infrastructure. Schools were integrated. Pediatricians and parents were shown another way. We were cautious – always. A missed step. A tragic accident, would have brought about the ire – “we told you so”, of the media and public, parents and professionals. University OT and College Rehabilitation Services Programs were introduced. Vocational training centres. Employment. Group homes with spare beds for respite. Apartment training. Home-based behavioural services. Access to schooling, training, and - for many, jobs. In time parents – most of whom never wanted the only alternative - the institution v home forever, came to believe in the alternative. Doctors as advisors bought in. Teachers too.

Strategically when communities weren't ready, government took on the role of change agent – with demonstration projects, turned over to community when successful. The institutional waiting list disappeared for the only thing the province had ever offered - a residential school - an institution. Funding was sustained through the reallocation of funds from the institution. By 1981 the regional population in the institution disappeared as over a thousand people returned always with the promise that if they wanted to return – they would be readmitted. Only one did, each summer – a visit to what was once his home.

I met Wolf once more. It was in Omaha in 1980 when I was asked as keynote to speak to a state parent's conference. I was asked to speak about our turnaround. While there I visited Wolf at ENCOR where the evolution had begun. We discussed the merit and the messages of Normalization, the principles of PASS in service development and how we had used it as a funding filter. How we had advocated for choice and engagement, planning and preparing of the people, the community, the support services. No one was left behind. No dumping. Always following the golden rule.

I remain concerned that the progress we had made, the attitudes we had changed, are transitory, too dependent on government and a funding priority. Concerned that the allure of the ideology of Normalization would wear off in a recession when the priority faded or the leaders retire. Concerned that the cycle would continue of “from back wards to back alleys” as per Michael Foucault's observation in *Madness and Civilization*. We didn't force our way into community. But we sure were pushy even called zealous from time to time but never integrating unless we were welcome. Ours today I am pleased to say, are not among the homeless. But communities may be

confused. I hope not. Parents remain supportive, assured that the community will care, even after they are gone.

Thank you Wolf Wolfensberger. We listened. We tried. And we were and continue to be tested.

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