

History of the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association

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The Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association came into existence with grass-roots support from across the country. People with different educational backgrounds and from different health related work settings came together with a willingness to work together to resolve common issues. This group recognized the need to create an organization to unite therapeutic recreation practitioners across the country. The purpose of this article is to identify key historical dates and events that lead to the incorporation of the association and the election of its first board of directors and to recognize the volunteers that made this possible.

On August 8-12, 1993 at the 3rd International Therapeutic Recreation Symposium in Richmond Hill, Ontario one of the sessions held was entitled: *The TR profession in Canada...where are we now and where are we going?* This session was facilitated by Darlene Murphy and Beth Velde and sponsored by the Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association. The need for a national association was identified at this meeting and a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) was formed consisting of representatives from across the country (Velde & Murphy, 1994). Membership on the NCC changed over time and included the following people: Denise Alexander from British Columbia, Darlene Murphy, Beth Velde, Sherry Shaefer, Lorna Snow and Barbara Smith from Alberta, Lori Herchuk-Norris from Saskatchewan, Wendi Chabi and Valarie McLean-Bakowski from Manitoba, Jane Hasty, Heather MacDonald and Joan Wiseman from Ontario, Michele Telio from Quebec, Kathy Sherwood and Micheline Comitz from New Brunswick, Rhonda Booth from Nova Scotia, and Patrick Reddick from Newfoundland.

During the latter part of 1993, throughout 1994 and during the early part of 1995 the NCC facilitated the development of proposals to consider possible structures for a Canadian therapeutic recreation organization (Murphy, 1996). The following proposals were developed:

1. Affiliation with Canadian Parks/Recreation Association
2. Affiliation with Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation
3. Affiliation with American Therapeutic Recreation Association - US
4. Affiliation with National Therapeutic Recreation Association – US
5. Stand-alone organization.

The majority of feedback indicated that a stand-alone organization would best meet the needs of Canadian therapeutic recreation practitioners and the NCC moved forward with this option. On June 9–10, 1995 the National Coordinating Committee met at the Radisson Hotel in Toronto, Ontario to plan for the development and incorporation of a stand-alone organization. The results of this meeting included development of the association name, vision and mission statement, board structure and membership criteria. The following people were present at the meeting: Denise Alexander, Sue Baptiste (Facilitator), Rhonda Booth, Wendy Chabi, Micheline Comitz, Jane Hastie, Val McLean-

Bakowski, Darlene Murphy, Patrick Reddick, Sherry Schaefer, Kathy Sherwood, Lorna Snow and Joan Wiseman.

Following the June 1995 meeting, CTRA researched and developed a draft philosophy, code of ethics and practice standards that were published in the spring 1996 issue of TRibune for feedback from grass-root supporters (Booth & Comitz, 1996). On August 31, 1996 the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association was incorporated. The founders of the Association were: Denise Alexander, Rhonda Booth, Micheline Comitz, Jane Hastie, Heather McDonald, Valarie McLean-Bakowski, Darlene Murphy, Patrick Reddick, Sherry Schaefer and Michele Telio.

On October 24-26, 1996 the founders/NCC met during the Therapeutic Recreation Symposium in Edmonton, Alberta to complete work on the philosophy, code of ethics and standards of practice. Present at the meeting were: Denise Alexander, Rhonda Booth, Lori Herchuk-Norris, Val McLean-Bakowski, Darlene Murphy, Patrick Reddick and Sherry Schaefer.

On August 9-13, 1997 the founders/NCC met during the 5th International Therapeutic Recreation Symposium in Edmonton, Alberta to coordinate the transfer of the association from the founders to the first elected board of directors. Present at the meeting were: Rhonda Booth, Micheline Comitz, Lori Herchuk-Norris, Valeria McLean-Bakowski, Darlene Murphy and Sherry Schaefer.

On June 18-20, 1998 the first Annual Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Conference was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The first elected board of directors took office at the end of the first Annual General Meeting of membership. The first elected board of directors for the 1998/99 membership year was: Colleen Hood (President), Nathalie Guerin (Vice President), Val McLean-Bakowski (Secretary), Barbara Smith (Treasurer), Helene Driscoll (Western Director), Wendy Stewart (Prairie Director), Flora Masella (Central Director), Patrick Reddick (Maritime Director), Lisa Ostiguy (Certification Director) and Rhonda Booth (Special Projects Director).

It is important to recognize and thank the many volunteers identified in this brief history. Special recognition goes to Darlene Murphy who as chairperson of the National Coordinating Committee stood out as a leader among leaders. Without her commitment and the support of the Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association we would not have been successful in creating the Canadian Therapeutic Recreation Association.

References List

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