



*Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto*

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## **Don't shrink from history.**

## **PRESERVE IT!**

100 Charles St. East, Toronto, M4Y 1V3

[info@psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com](mailto:info@psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com)

416-929-8910

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by psychiatric survivors.

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Archives, Toronto

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## **The Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto**

### **Mission Statement**

The Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto is dedicated to ensuring that the rich history of people who have experienced the psychiatric system is preserved for our community and the wider community as a resource from which everyone can share and learn.

The Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto has been meeting regularly since January 2001. We are a group of volunteers working together to preserve the rich history of people who have experienced the psychiatric system.

PSAT is a grass roots organization that is run for and by psychiatric survivors to preserve all aspects of our history. The Archives seeks to reflect the broad diversity of views that are expressed by all people with a psychiatric history however they choose to self-identify.

First person expression on this topic in all media formats are particularly welcome.

The need for these archives has grown out of a recognition that our history has been too often ignored or trivialized by mainstream historians, researchers and medical professionals.

PSAT is located at 100 Charles Street East (south of Bloor and west of Sherbourne—close to the Bloor Subway Station). PSAT has been open for individual research appointments since June 2006.

Please contact our archivist at least a week in advance when making an appointment:  
416-929-8910.

[info@psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com](mailto:info@psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com)

### **What do these people have in common?**

*Alexander Cruden (1701-1770)*

*Elizabeth Packard (1816-1897)*

*Clifford Beers (1876-1943)*

*Irit Shimrat (1958-present)*

They have each helped to record the history of a group of people who are not supposed to have any history – “mad people”, “the insane” or “mentally ill”. They did this by writing and, in some cases, by agitating for their rights. So too have countless other people. Some are famous. Most are not. The Psychiatric Survivor Archives, Toronto, wants to remember them all.

Since ancient times people considered “disordered in mind” have been restrained, confined, ostracized and persecuted.

There is also another side to this history. Since ancient times, people considered mad have contributed to the world through their labour, friendship, creativity, and in numerous uncelebrated ways. There is much tragedy in this history. But there is also much hope and pride.



Poster from the  
Queen Street Patients  
Council, c. 1993

## What do these groups have in common?

### \* **Alleged Lunatics' Friends Society**

(Britain) 1845-1863

### \* **We Are Not Alone**

(United States) Circa mid-1940's

### \* **We Shall Overcome**

(Norway) 1968 to present

### \* **Vancouver Mental Patient's Association**

(Canada) 1971 to present

These were the first organized groups in each country that were established by and for people who had been in mental institutions. That is a lot of history for people who aren't supposed to have any! There is plenty more history like this if we look for it and preserve it.

Plans are under way to create an archives exclusively devoted for just this purpose. Much of our history has too often been ignored or trivialized by mainstream historians. Our history is far too important to be left up to academic historians alone! It is essential that an alternative, psychiatric survivor operated archives be established to build on the past by preserving our rich history for the future.



Graphic from cover of *Shrink Resistant: The Struggle Against Psychiatry in Canada*, Published 1988.

## Collections Policy and Categories

The Archives collects material related to history from the perspective of psychiatric survivors and consumers as well as allies and the wider community. This includes antipsychiatry as well as pro-psychiatry material and everything in between. The stipulation is that the material being collected must have been created by, or reflect the perspectives of people who have been, or who are psychiatric consumer/ survivors. A sample of some of the material we've collected includes:

- First-person Accounts - Published
- Unpublished Biographies and Autobiographies,
- Photographs, Artifacts,
- Posters, Artwork, Letters, Audio, Video.

Tapes which include such themes as:

- Psychiatry, Class, Race and Ethnicity
- Women, Gender, Sexual Orientation
- Psychiatry
- Organized Groups, Movement Groups
- Drugs and Drug Companies
- Electroshock

Already, the Archives has hundreds of videos and audio tapes collected and recorded over the last 20 years by wellknown antipsychiatry activist Don Weitz. There are documents related to the early history of the psychiatric patients' movement in Ontario since the 1970s and an extensive collection of material on electro-shock. A complete set of the 1980-1990 magazine, *Phoenix Rising* is also preserved. All psychiatric consumer/survivors and allies are welcome to support this project in any way possible.



Image taken from 'Phoenix Rising' magazine. Published in Toronto, 1980-1990.

The Archives plans to build on important historical material that is currently located in PSAT by expanding the collection.

## How You Can Contribute to the Archives?

You can contribute to PSAT by making a donation to Psychiatric Survivor Archives:

1. You may make a financial contribution to the archives by sending a cheque made out to PSAT. PSAT is a non-profit organization.
2. You can also contribute materials to PSAT. If you have old files, letters, photographs, please donate them to the Archives! We have made our own history so let's preserve it!

If you would like to donate materials to our Archives please email us at:

[donations@  
psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com](mailto:donations@psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com)