

THEN/HiER SMALL PROJECT GRANT
FINAL REPORT

UNDERSTANDING POWER, APPRECIATING DIFFERENCE: BUILDING HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH E-LEARNING

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In July 2010, THEN/HiER generously granted funds to complete a set of tasks that would result in the launch of three teaching units, collectively entitled *More for the Mind: Histories of Mental Health for the Classroom*, on the *History of Madness in Canada/ Histoire de la folie au Canada* website. These tasks included:

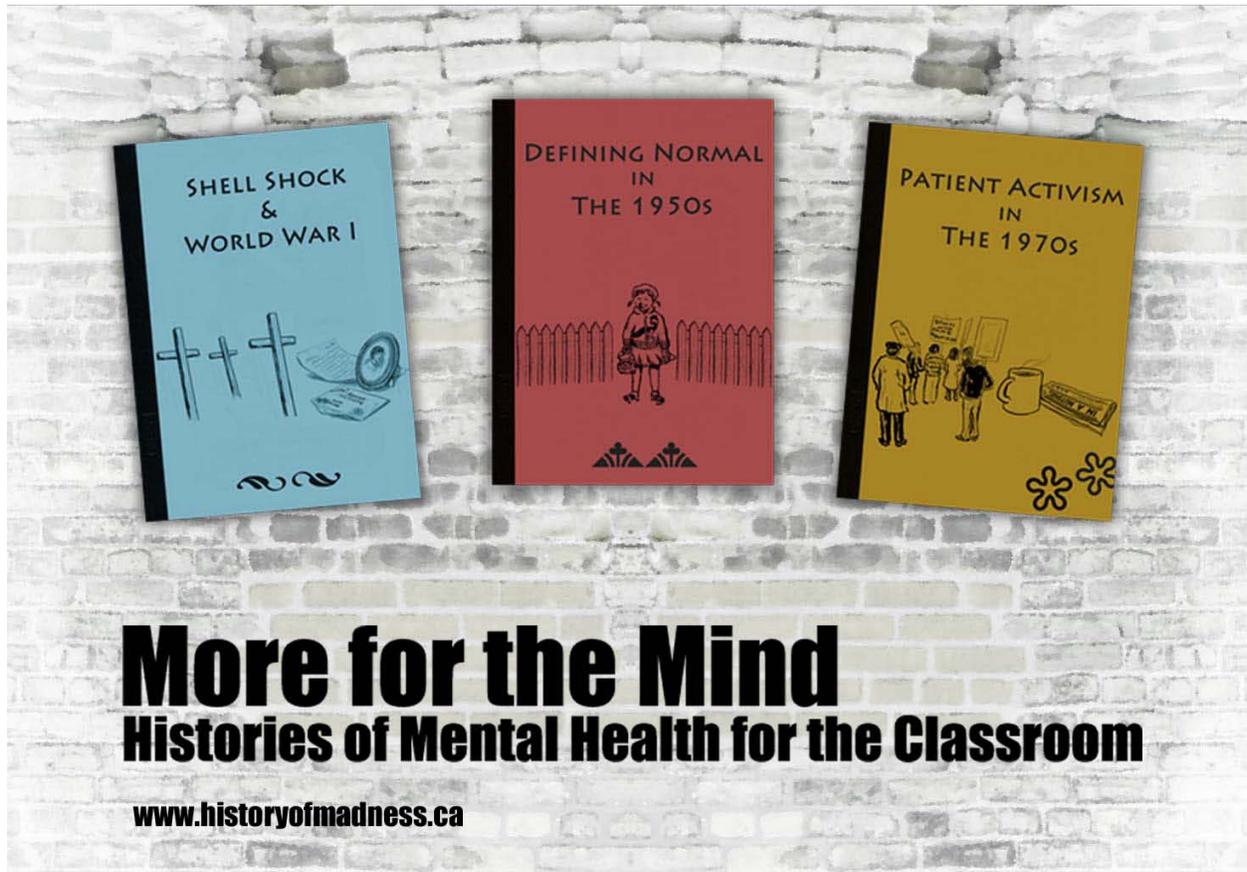
1. Research on where lesson plans can link to curricula in different provinces;
2. Revisions to the previously developed lessons plans based on information gained through educational and community consultations;
3. The creation of a set of visually engaging, easily accessible secondary school curriculum website pages.

The funding we received enabled us to hire three individuals: 1) Pam Cairns, a teacher in School District 73 (Kamloops/Thompson), worked with us to identify relevant links to Canadian provincial curriculum tables and assisted with the rather significant revision of the three lesson plans; 2) Nathan Schucher, a secondary school student in Toronto, helped us negotiate the tricky terrain of website design; and 3) Willie Willis, also a secondary school student in Toronto, lent his considerable artistic talents to the artwork in the web pages and did basic uploading and linking. We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support and input of Lanny Beckman – a key architect of Canada’s fledgling mental health survivor/consumer community in the early 1970s.

The *More for the Mind* lesson plans are developed for secondary school learners and consist of three units: *Shell Shocked: World War I & Mental Health*, *Defining Normal: Experts & Gender Roles in the 1950s*, and *Questioning Authority: Patient Activism in the 1970s*. Underlying the lesson plans is the concept of historical empathy: looking to the past to gain fresh understandings of marginalized and vulnerable people, and putting the learner in the position of those excluded from the mainstream. Empathy – as front-line health practitioners and disability scholars tell us – is critical to the delivery of more effective care and works to foster social inclusion. A more nuanced historical analysis can also provide insight into Canadian society today and impart lessons concerning power, suffering, and the potential of community initiatives. In addition, this innovative teaching material about mental health will be a welcome tool for teachers striving to meet new curricular expectations to present this challenging topic in the classroom.

We believe the history of our mental health system - and personal stories of people deemed “mentally ill” – can unsettle our national narrative in ways which help students understand the complexity of the historical process. *More for the Mind* thus offers learners an alternative history of Canada. Using an array of distinctive and engaging primary

documents, multi-media resources, and hands-on activities, these lessons reinterpret World War I, the post-World War II era, and radical social movements of the 1970s from the perspective of those whose lives were shaped by mental health concerns. The web pages, to be officially launched on 1 March 2011, can be accessed through the education portal of the History of Madness in Canada (historyofmadness.ca).



Both Megan Davies and Diane Purvey sincerely thank THEN/HiER for supporting the development and launch of the *More for the Mind* lesson plans.