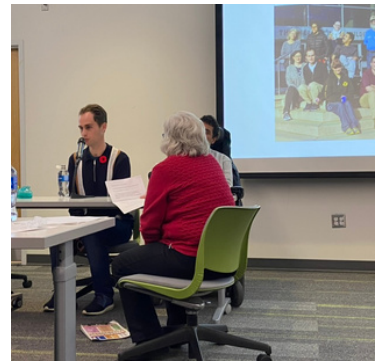




# BRIAN HENNEN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY LECTURE 2024

## Feedback from Attendees



# Living in Community is a Human Right

We're pleased to share this summary of feedback from attendees of the second annual Brian Hennen Inclusive Community Lecture Series, held on November 4, 2024. This year's theme was ***Living in Community is a Human Right***.

The event included an opening lecture by esteemed lawyer, Vince Calderhead, about the historic Disability Rights Coalition human rights case against the Province of Nova Scotia. He was followed by the advocates from the My Home My Rights project, who offered a first-voice exploration of what it looks like to live in the community with appropriate support and human rights respected.

At the intermission, both in-person and online attendees were asked to offer their thoughts on four questions:

- What does home mean to you?
- Why does it matter that everyone's right to live in community is respected?
- How can we better educate the public about the importance of community living (big and small things!)?
- What did you hear from the speakers that made an impression or changed your thinking about housing and people with disabilities?

**The following is a summary of themes and feedback we gathered from hundreds of responses.**



# What does home mean to you?

Home is more than just a physical space — it's a deeply personal and meaningful concept. For the participants, it embodies the following themes:

## **Safety and Security**

- A place where one feels safe, secure, and free from harm or worry.
- A sanctuary providing refuge from the pressures and scrutiny of the outside world.

## **Comfort and Peace**

- A space to relax, rest, and find peace.
- A place where basic needs are met, and one can enjoy warmth, cleanliness, and comfort.

## **Freedom and Independence**

- A space where people have full autonomy to make their own choices — what to eat, when to sleep, who to invite, how to decorate, and whether to have pets.
- A place where personal agency and self-determination are respected.

## **Belonging and Acceptance**

- A home is where one is accepted, respected, and loved for who they truly are; able to show vulnerabilities without judgment.

## **Connection and Support**

- A place to share experiences, support loved ones, and be supported in return.
- A hub for nurturing relationships with family, friends, or chosen communities.



## Dignity and Respect

- A home preserves one's dignity by offering privacy, choice, and respect.
- It is a space where expectations are self-defined, not imposed by others.

## Familiarity and Comfort

- A home is personal and uniquely tailored — a reflection of oneself, that includes being sensory-safe and feeling familiar and comforting.

## Home means:



# Why Does It Matter That Everyone's Right to Live in Community is Respected?

Building on the themes of the speakers, the feedback from attendees made it clear that the right to live in community is, first and foremost, about upholding the principles of human rights, equity, and inclusion. Other themes that many of the participants participants noted were:

## **Dignity and Choice**

- People have the right to decide how and where they live, with access to the resources and opportunities needed to shape their lives.

## **Belonging and Connection**

- Communities foster belonging, care, and support, creating stronger networks that benefit everyone.

## **Strength of Communities**

- A community's strength is reflected in how it treats its most vulnerable. Inclusion builds compassion and ensures everyone contributes and thrives.

## **Impact on Individuals and Society**

- Inclusion ensures people feel safe, valued, and secure, while exclusion weakens both individuals and communities.

## **Key to Progress and Democracy**

- Respecting this right upholds democratic values of equality, participation, and shared responsibility, making society better for all.

# How can we better educate the public about the importance of community living?

We heard from participants a number of creative and interesting ideas for what could be done to raise awareness and educate the public. We have combined them into actions and ideas by themes:

- Use plain language and create more first-voice videos, commercials, and exhibitions like *My Home, My Rights*.
- Use TV, social media, and film to inform the public about the diversity of our communities and the systemic discrimination.
- Collaborate with media to feature art and stories on the theme of "home in the community," especially from artists with disabilities.
- Share stories of people involved to bring the issue to life.
- Showcase the success of inclusive community living to challenge stereotypes and reveal harms of discrimination.
- Get community leaders to regularly speak in support of community living, and make it a public priority.
- Track and publish data annually to measure progress and keep the public informed of the progress of The Remedy.
- Organize impactful demonstrations, such as artistic performances or protests outside the Premier's office to draw attention housing as a right.
- Encourage people to vote for candidates committed to addressing housing rights.
- Demonstrate how it feels to lose choice and control by using examples from areas of life that all people make choices in: where to shop, where to go to school, where to work
- Introduce inclusive education in schools and hold public talks, rallies, and exhibitions in libraries, hospitals, and theaters.

# What did you hear from the speakers that made an impression or changed your thinking about housing and people with disabilities?

Participants at the lecture shared the key takeaways that impacted perhaps changed or made an impression in their understanding of housing and people with disabilities:

- The comparison between the Disability Support Program and Income Assistance challenges misconceptions about entitlement and gratitude for basic supports.
- Displacement from friends, family, and familiar places has a devastating impact on individuals' well-being.
- It's unacceptable for people to be placed indefinitely in locked wards — this practice is inhumane.
- The urgency of meeting the remedy schedule cannot be overstated, as progress is already 6–12 months behind. A coordinated effort is needed to ensure the government is held to its commitments.
- The tireless work of advocates like Beth inspires others to carry the torch and continue the fight for justice.
- We have the ability — and responsibility — to pressure the government for change and ensure no one has to wait 40 years for basic rights to be upheld.
- Bureaucracies too often are creating unnecessary obstacles.
- Winning the case should have been enough; the continued struggle for rights is frustrating and angering.
- Many people wrongly see the care of a disabled person as a private problem rather than a social issue.
- For some, this was their first introduction to the Remedy, sparking curiosity and a desire to learn more about its implementation plan.





The speakers at this year's event highlighted the critical need for choice, systemic accountability, and collective action to ensure housing rights for people with disabilities are respected and realized. This attendee feedback reflected these themes. Collectively, you all spoke to the need for structured systems to hold governments accountable, to ensure timely implementation of solutions and the need for continued education, advocacy, and action on housing and the right to live in community.

The Brian Hennen Inclusive Community Lecture Series is supported annually by generous donations in memory of Dr. Hennen, and in honour of his tireless work as a disability advocate. To contribute, visit [\*\*giving.dal.ca/drbranhennen\*\*](https://giving.dal.ca/drbranhennen).

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