

Toronto 2008

The third **Canadian Burn Survivors Conference** was held in Toronto from **June 18 to 21, 2008**, and was hosted by the **Toronto Professional Fire Fighters Association**. Nancy Sinclair, the Director of Camp BUCKO (“**B**urn **C**amp for **K**ids in **O**ntario”) put together an exciting and meaningful program that made the conference a huge success.



Approximately 100 burn survivors, family members, fire fighters and burn unit staff were in attendance. Attendees came from all across the country and many experienced their first burn conference.

Each morning, the conference attendees were brought together by Steve Peck, a team building facilitator and camp counsellor training specialist, for some fun and interactive games to get everyone awake and help us get to know each other.



Keynote Speaker Charlene Pell shared her journey following a severe injury she sustained in 1994. Charlene’s triumph in her recovery served to be inspirational for all in attendance. She has dedicated her life to helping others cope with devastating challenges by founding “Pell Communications” and by serving as a tireless volunteer in the burn community. Charlene also led a session on Strategies to Cope with Staring, where discussion included why people stare and techniques to improve social encounters and facilitate communication.

John Westhaver was the keynote speaker on the second day of the conference and shared his survival and recovery following a catastrophic car crash that left him with life-threatening burns to 75 per cent of his body, and ended the lives of his three best friends. John shared how he found the inner strength to move forward in life; he now devotes his life to promoting safe driving and helping other burn survivors. His story was filled with hope and was very uplifting.

On the last morning of the conference, Elizabeth Martin shared her recovery journey following a helicopter crash that left her with 33 per cent burns. She was injured in Siberia and her gripping story of getting back to Canada and taking charge of her recovery was truly inspirational.

There were many break-out sessions that included topics such as “Intimacy after a Burn Injury”, “Hidden Burns”, “Adults Burned as Children”, “Creating Your Personal Style”, and “Reclaiming



Self-Confidence after a Burn Injury”. There were also many sharing circles that allowed each and every conference attendee to participate in sharing with a group of others who had been through a similar experience.

The opening reception was rockin’ indeed with the music of “Firesound”, a rock band of fire fighters who entertained with some classics. Dancing and refreshments were enjoyed by all.



The Waterfront Fire Station was host to a delicious barbeque dinner on Thursday evening.



The conference ended with a dinner cruise on the Toronto Harbour, and despite the chilly weather, everyone was warmed by the wonderful feelings of camaraderie that made being at the conference so special!

