



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Central Alberta
Mental health for all

About Cardboard Stores

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Thank you so much for coming to our Cardboard Stories presentation. A little history on this project – We actually received funding from RBC back in 2013 for a “Stigma Reduction Video Project”. There were a few attempts at this project, but for a variety of reasons, it never got completed.

It was noticed that staff would collect obituaries of clients that had passed away in memory of them and honouring their lives. The thought was to find a way to honour these individuals while they are with us, rather than in death. It also encompasses the idea of challenging stigmatization by providing an opportunity for the viewer to understand that behind every person there is a story.

This project stemmed from the Rethink Homelessness project through the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. We received permission to use their title “Cardboard Stories” as long as we share our video with them.

Stigma is a difficult thing. It is all too common that people look at an individual without housing and blame addiction or mental health or poor choices without any thought. The thing we forget to consider is “Why do they have addiction?” or “What kind of mental health supports have they had to prevent homelessness?” or more importantly to me – “Do you, as the average housed person, even know if there are supports for people with mental health concerns?” It is so easy to judge without knowing the facts.

I want you to imagine the very worst day you’ve ever had. How did you cope with that day? Did you talk to someone? What if you had no friends? Did you go for a run? What if the bad scenario involved your health? Did you have a drink? Or two? Now imagine you had that exact day for a whole week. What about a whole year? How long would it take you before you had some significant mental health issues and/or addictions to help you cope?

We know that there are at LEAST 200 people in Red Deer that are without permanent housing at any given time. We also know that the economy has caused new struggles for people that previously had stability. The fact is that income assistance for people without a job is \$424/month and we know that the average bachelor/one bedroom suite is around \$800/month. If you have been diagnosed as being unable to work due to medical or mental health reasons you can obtain more; however diagnoses can be expensive and paperwork to obtain them can be overwhelming.

As you watch this short video, please think about all of these issues and open your hearts to the stories of our community neighbours.

Thank you so much to everyone who participated in this video. It was so brave of them to share something that is important to them with the world. Thank you to Safe Harbour for providing the venue for the filming, thanks to Rene Rondeau for doing the video and the beautiful edit. Our own staff team, Ian, Kimberly, and Candace helped with all of the organizing of this project and I am very proud of their hard work!