



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Monday, September 29, 2008) – OTTAWA – In what visionary Canadian artist Thom Sokoloski likens to an “archaeological dig” to unearth the long buried stories of intellectual disability in Canada, the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) brings his new participatory installation, *The Encampment* to Major’s Hill Park in Ottawa from October 2nd to 4th.

At a news conference today, Sokoloski and his collaborator Jenny McCowan spoke about the genesis of this work of art, featuring seventy white nineteenth century expeditionary tents, which will light up the park from Thursday to Saturday. They worked with volunteer collaborators from across the country who researched the stories of intolerance and exclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. Inside each tent is a visual experience inspired by these narratives.

Visitors can wander from tent to tent through the course of an evening or simply take in the view from the National Gallery of Canada, the U.S. Embassy or the Chateau Laurier to feel the full impact of the installation. Much like Christo’s grand projects in capitals around the world, the scale and quiet grandeur of the work is an arresting meditation on our sense of place and the histories buried beneath our public spaces.

Michael Bach, the Executive Vice President of the CACL, introduced *The Encampment* as the centerpiece of the organization’s 50th anniversary *Diversity Includes* campaign, to raise national awareness for the inclusion of people with intellectual disability. “Partnering with artists of Thom’s and Jenny’s caliber to bring this work to fruition was more than we could have hoped for when we began plotting our campaign. It is a great pleasure to be sharing the podium with both of them today.”

“We worked with collaborators from across the country on this project because we wanted to truly do justice to the diversity of stories, the lives led and forgotten, which make up the buried history of intellectual disability in this country,” Sokoloski added. “There was no other way this installation could be done if we were going to work in the national capital.”

The installation was also made possible with support from the National Capital Commission (NCC). Guy Laflamme, Vice President of Communications and Marketing for the NCC, stated this unique collaboration between the arts and the disability communities caught their interest right away. "It is precisely the kind of project the National Capital Commission hopes to support. In its scale, its ambition and in its approach in reaching out to communities across this city - and across this country - *The Encampment* is a truly necessary work of art here in the capital, for Canadians and for those visiting us from around the world."

The Encampment is open from 7 pm to midnight, each night, from October 2nd to 4th, and is free to the public.

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The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is a national association of over 40,000 members, 400 local, family led Associations for Community Living and 13 provincial/territorial Associations. We are families, people with intellectual disabilities and our supporters working together to ensure all people:

- Have the same rights and access to choice, supports and services as all other people.
- Have the same opportunities as others to live in freedom and dignity, and have the needed support to do so.
- Are able to voice and realize their aspirations and rights.

Founded in 1958, CACL provides leadership on the issue of inclusion and human rights of people with intellectual disabilities through public awareness, family leadership, community partnerships, research and information, and policy dialogue.

The Encampment is presented in part by the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) as a cultural initiative of its 50th anniversary to bring national awareness to the inclusion of people with an intellectual disability. It is in partnership with the National Capital Commission (NCC) and Studio SM. The project has already evolved from its genesis at the inaugural Nuit Blanche 2006, to its New York City version in October 2007 on Roosevelt Island, and this national version of The Encampment in Ottawa will tour to Toronto in the early summer of 2009, where it will be presented by Community Living Toronto.

STUDIO SM

Thom Sokoloski, trained in New York City and Paris and was one of the original founders of The Theatre Centre and the Native Theatre School. He directed the operatic works of R. Murray Schafer including the acclaimed productions of RA at the Ontario Science Centre and Hermes Trismegistos inside Union Station. He commissioned and produced Ahmed Hassan's 14 Remembered and Michael Nyman at Massey Hall as well as the international tour of Claude Vivier's opera Kopernikus. His last foray into the performing arts was Kafka in Love, a water-opera staged inside Hart House swimming pool with synchronized swimmers and a video sound installation for the World Stage Festival. He programmed the McLuhan Festival of the Future 04 and conceived Interactive O5 for the Toronto International Art Fair curating interactive media art in public spaces. New works are underway for Henry Hudson's 400th anniversary in New York Satet and the Luminato Festival in Toronto.

Jenny McCowan has a background in choreography, circus, mass games, rhythmic gymnastics, rave and hip-hop culture, as well as being educator. She developed an aesthetic of 'public momentum,' a curriculum for urban youth that blends hip-hop and literacy and has worked in London, Berlin, Lyon, Miami and New York.

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