

Day of MOURNING



Tracy Ford



It was late spring 2007 when Tracy learned that her dad, a retired electrician, had been diagnosed with mesothelioma – a terminal, painful form of lung cancer caused by asbestos. The mill where he worked for more than 30 years was known to be full of asbestos. Over the next 16 months Tracy’s mum worked tirelessly to care for her dad without the benefit of extended family, night nurses or hospice services. Tracy’s dad struggled to survive while the family struggled with BC’s doctors and the compensation system, both ill-equipped to deal with her dad’s illness. Ultimately, they had to turn to the US to get the medical help her dad needed and the compensation that her family deserved.

Tracy’s dad passed away in October 2008 with family at his side.

Following her dad’s death, Tracy and her mum started a non-profit grassroots charity called AREA Fund, which has raised more than \$100,000. AREA Fund now uses this money to support asbestos-related research, education and advocacy projects. Most recently, they granted money to the BC Labour Heritage Centre for a permanent [Asbestos Memorial here in Vancouver – “Magic and Lethal.”](#) It will be the first public monument in North America to commemorate this tragedy. The unveiling takes place on Monday, June 20th.

“Awareness is key as asbestos-related diseases are not a thing of the past,” says Tracy. “They are still the number one occupational killer in BC and right across Canada and although the current wave of asbestos victims is predominantly trades people who were exposed 30 to 60 years ago, another wave is predicted 10 to 40 years from now.” In this second wave, she says the victims could be anyone, as exposure is anticipated to be mainly due to aging and deteriorating asbestos-containing materials that are all around us. “Literally thousands of building materials containing asbestos were used right through the 1980s in our homes, our schools, and our public buildings,” explains Tracy.

Tracy asks people to think twice before disturbing any building material and hopes people will contact an abatement specialist if there’s any possibility of it containing asbestos. “I want to emphasize that asbestos is invisible and deadly; there’s no known safe exposure limit and there are no cures for the diseases that it creates.”