

## Shining A Light in the Dark

### Lisa Browning

I have always believed that everything happens for a reason, and that reason is our highest good. Sometimes the reason is clear, right from the beginning, while at other times it takes time for us to

realize the significance of the event. It's like putting a puzzle together. We don't know the whole story until each missing piece is in place.



This was the case for me, in November 2019, when a friend and colleague sent me an email about a documentary screening at River Run. "Thought you might be interested in this," the email read. I quickly scanned the event listing, and the words "abuse" and "addiction" jumped off the page. Because the main focus of my business, and my life, was helping to empower people who had struggled with those very things, I read no further, and registered for the event.

As it turned out, the documentary (*Prey*) was the story of one man's lengthy struggle to find recovery and receive justice for sexual abuse suffered as a child, and documented his lawsuit against the Catholic Church. And while the documentary was incredibly well done, I couldn't quite figure out why I had felt so compelled to attend. After all, sexual abuse in the Catholic Church was not an issue that I had ever even considered becoming involved in, from an empowerment perspective.

At the end of the documentary, a gentleman by the name of Bob McCabe, who had been instrumental in bringing the documentary to Guelph, got up and spoke briefly. His final words were, "Now if only we could find a way for these men to tell their stories."

Aha! Another piece of the puzzle fell into place!

I sent Bob an email and explained who I was, and what I did, and we made arrangements to meet over lunch the following week. As soon as I sat down, I felt like I had known him forever. So many synchronicities. We knew a lot of the same people, and we had been at

several of the same events. And certainly, our passion for helping people who had experienced trauma was a common bond.

Over lunch, Bob told me about Recovery Speaking Initiative (RSI), a charity he was in the process of establishing, designed to provide advocacy and support to those in recovery from the trauma of sexual abuse and addiction. When he asked me if I would consider being on the board of directors, I knew I didn't have to "consider" it at all. I told him right then and there that I would be honoured to serve in that capacity.

Through my work on the board, and the people I have met as a result of my affiliation with RSI, my resilience in the aftermath of my own trauma has strengthened. I had the honour of publishing an anthology of empowerment stories in support of RSI (aptly titled: *What A Gift!*), and I was overwhelmed by not only the courage of each and every writer, but also by the fact that several of them told me that the opportunity to share their stories – to be heard – was life-changing.

In *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, author Robin Sharma said, "You have the capacity to be more than a prisoner of your past." Brianna Wiest (*The Mountain Is You*) expands on this point by saying, "Though you cannot change what happened in the past, by shifting your perspective of it, you can change how you are right now. You can change the story, and you can change your life." I know that Bob would agree with this as much as I do.

*For more information about Recovery Speaking Initiative, visit [www.recoveryspeaking.org](http://www.recoveryspeaking.org).*

