

What a long strange trip it's been

By Allan Strong

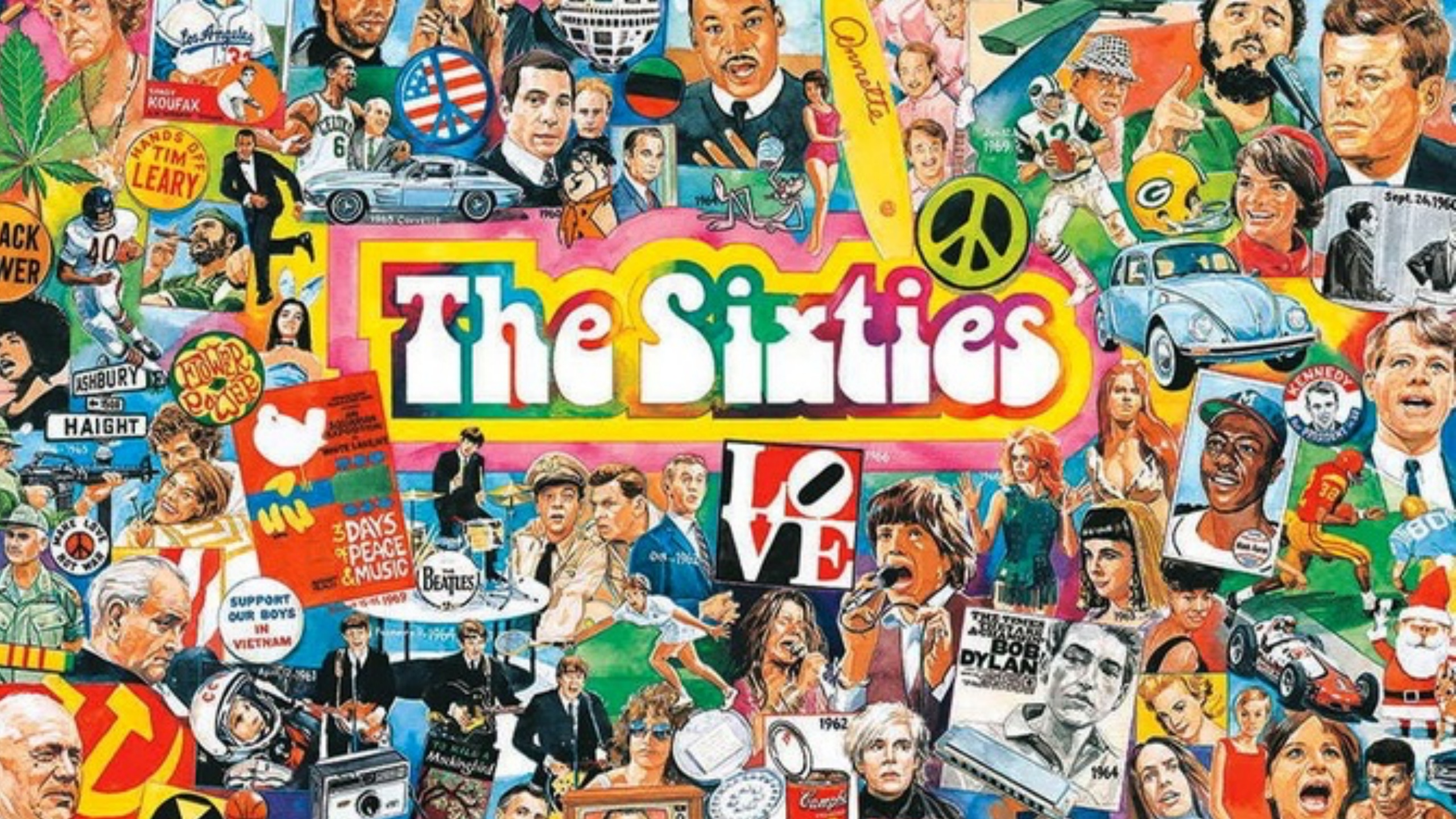
Video link: <https://vimeo.com/488324439>

Overview

- High level view of the history of the consumer-survivor community
- Not dates but themes



Way back when.....



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- De-institutionalization began in the sixties
- Consumer-Survivor movement influenced and inspired by the various movements – Peace movement, women’s movement, Gay Pride movement
- Grew out of a desire to address abuses, discrimination and isolation associated with “mental illness”
- Went from being “outsiders” to “insiders” to “reluctant participants”

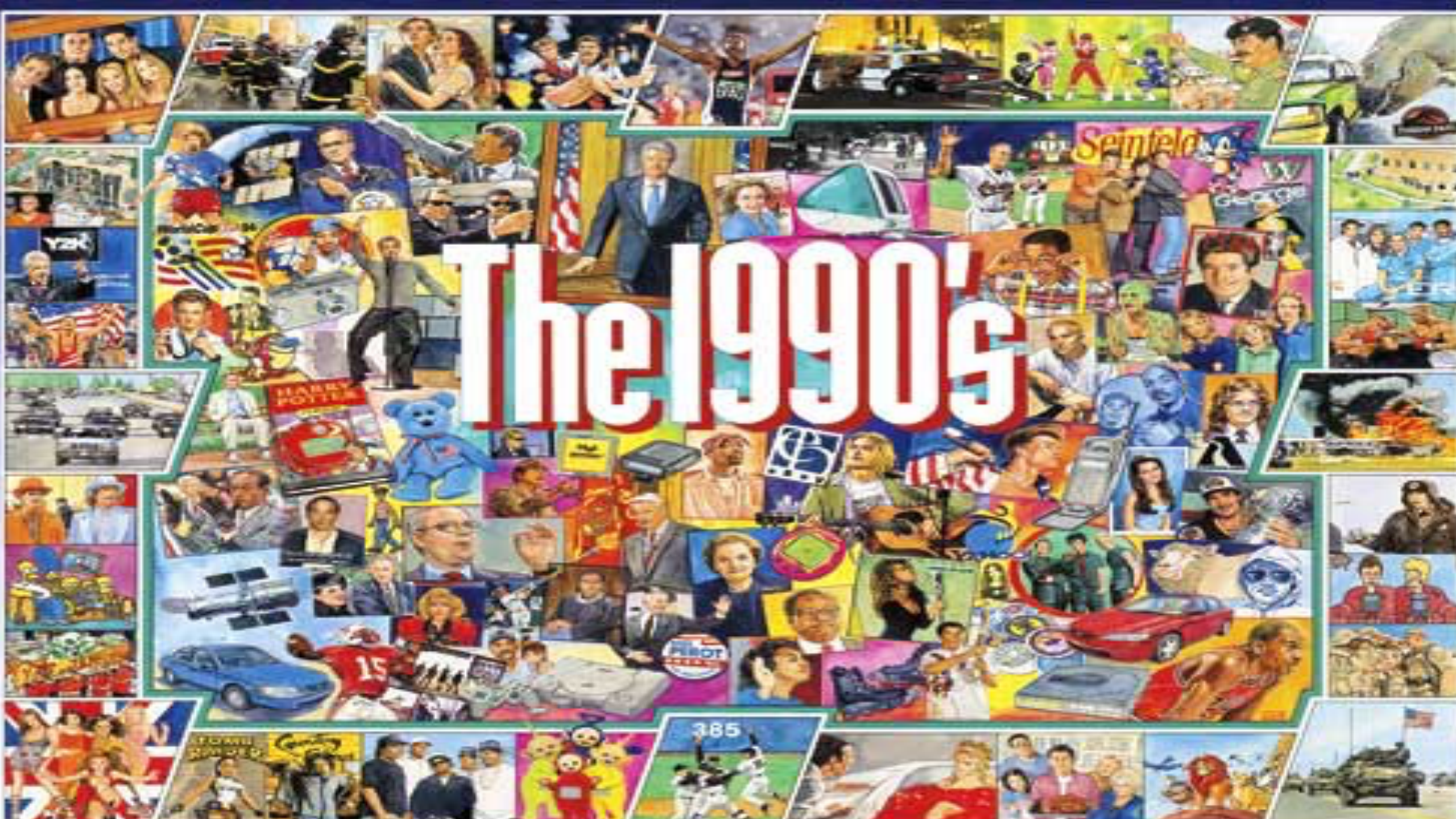


The Seventies cont'd

- In Toronto, Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital closes – concern about what to do with those that were once housed there
- In Vancouver, former in-patients start to band together to offer each other support
- Growth of survivor voice critical of the way people were treated by the system (Don Weitz, Bonnie Burstow, Judi Chamberlin, etc.)

The Eighties

- Groups of c/s began to form in various communities (Toronto, Kitchener as examples)
- Supportive and helped people find community – political activity against the system
- Money flowed into community mental health – supportive housing, etc.
- Broadening social movement
- Shift in policy – Graham Report 1988 – involved survivors



The Nineties

- With funding there came a shift to becoming providers of “service”
- Can CSI's be leaders in a social movement and accept gov't funding to provide service
- Some CSI's did well, others faltered and lost funding – led to the question was funding a set-up?
- Making it Happen – 1999
- Heightened focus on the role and involvement of consumers in planning, developing and evaluating of services

The new millennium... slip, sliding away



- Introduction of the LHINS
- Every Door is the Right Door (2009)
- Recovery became a big thing in the early part of the 2000's – not so much towards the end
- Lots of talk about the importance of consumer and family involvement

The new millennium.....

- Continued talk about the importance of consumers, little action
- Shift away from Consumer organizations and more focus on individual peer workers
- CSI Builder (2009) – recommendations on how to support CSI's made: none of the recommendations implemented
- CSI's are merged with other mainstream orgs – number of free standing CSI's decreasing
- Greater emphasis on accountability - numbers



- Fewer independent CSI's
- Role of advocacy diminished – remaining org's struggle to keep up
- Flip side – some money has flowed for Peer Workers
- Minster's Advisory Council Mental Health

Investigating the State of Peer Support

- 2014 - 150 peer workers

Present day – Right Here, Right Now

- Uneven approach by LHIN's to consumer orgs – how things are done varies from LHIN to LHIN
- Mergers with mainstream orgs. vary in how “autonomous” CSI's are able to be
- There is less of a focus/interest on CSI's and more on peer workers
- Investigating the State of Peer Work in Ontario – 2014
- Professionalization of peer support
- Peer Support Canada

And then came Ford



The Ford Years

- Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Michael Tibollo (2019)
- Stated that mental health and addictions is a priority
- Indicates that the LHINS will be shut down
- Ontario Health Teams are now the thing – another round of health care reform

What does all this mean ?

- We are at a crossroads – are we still a social movement or are we service providers ?
- What do we focus on?
- Are we still relevant?

What does the future hold?

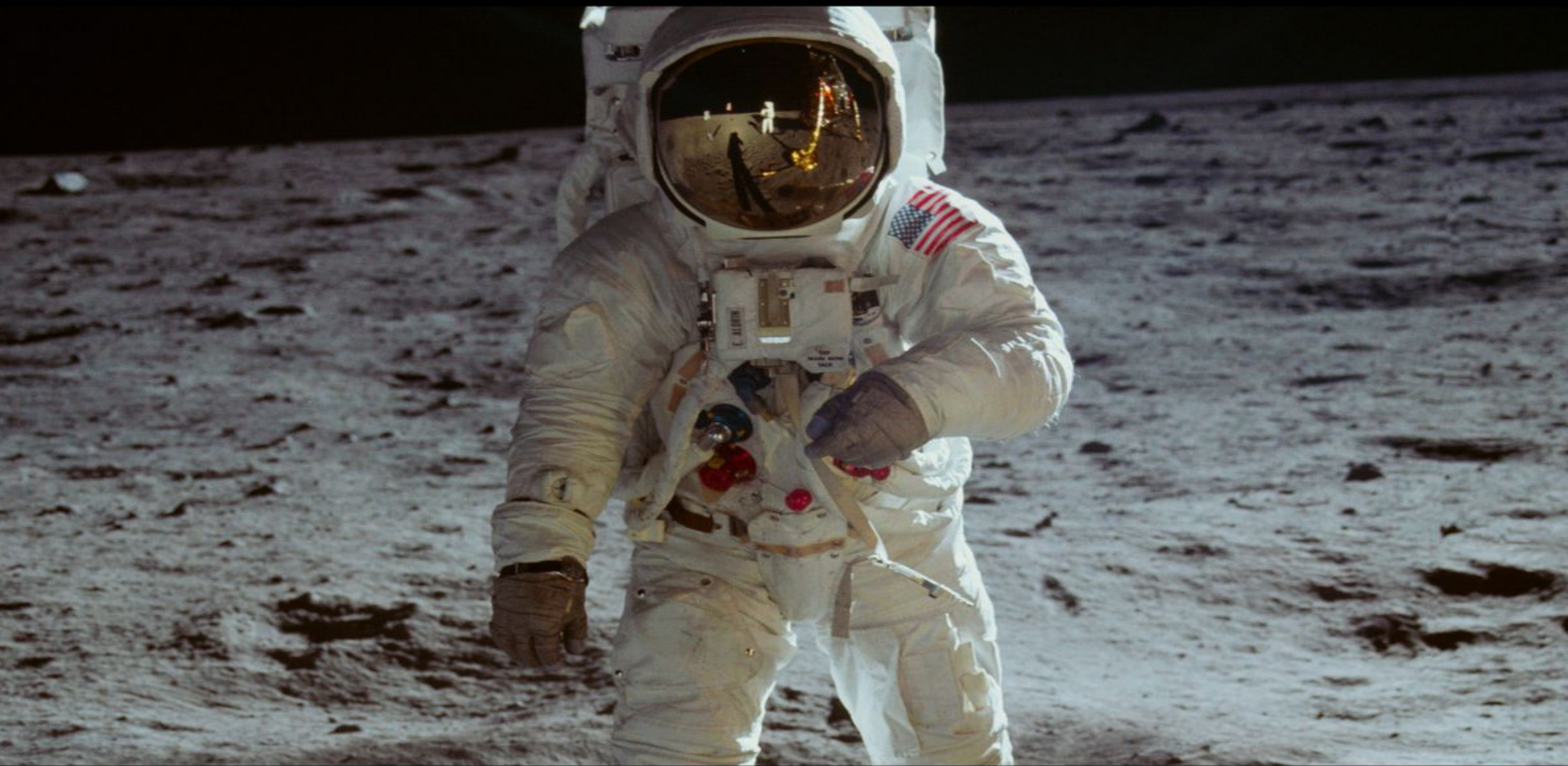


Some ideas....

- Do we become professional – establish a college with guidelines for certification, training, code of conduct , etc.
- Do we advocate for the protection of CSI's or do we push for more peer workers, or do we do both
- Do we continue to push for more funding from gov't or do we seek funds from elsewhere
- Do we say “screw it” and walk away

At end of it all

- There has been a rich history of consumer activism that has produced phenomenal results...
- We have had our challenges and we are still here
- If not us then who?

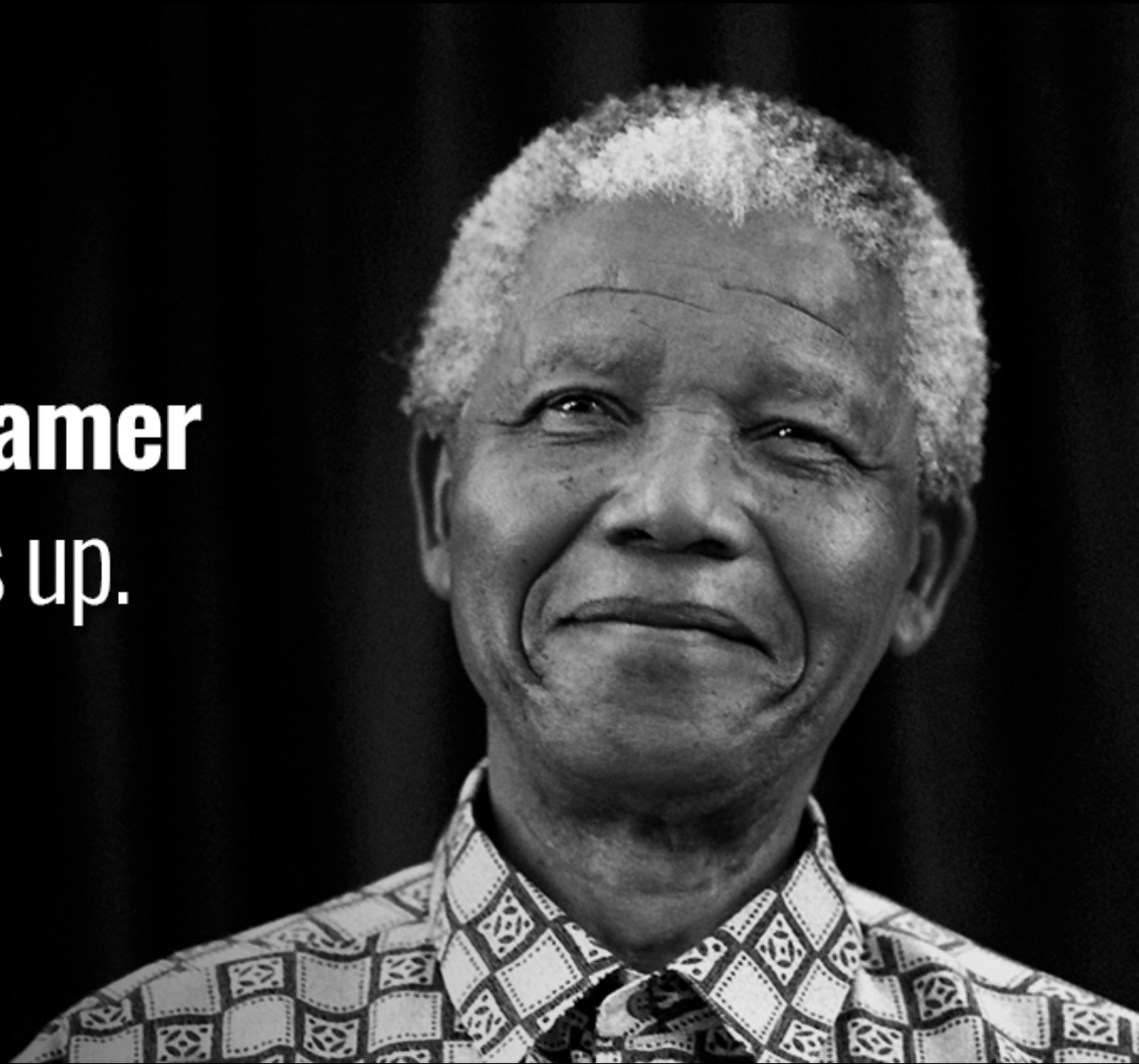




**A winner is a dreamer
who never gives up.**

- Nelson Mandela

Goalcast





Some men see things the way they
are and ask why?,
I dream things that never were and
ask why not?

George Bernard Shaw