

# THE POWER OF ONE TRAGEDY: THE HEATHER CROWE STORY

Heather Crowe worked as a waitress for over 40 years. In March 2002 she was diagnosed with lung cancer, although she never had smoked. Her cancer was caused by exposure to 2<sup>ND</sup> hand smoke in the workplace.

## THE PLANETS ALIGN

The day after her biopsy, a regular at the restaurant where she worked noticed that she was favouring her arm. Heather informed him that she had just been diagnosed with lung cancer from second-hand smoke.

The customer happened to work for the Tobacco Control Branch of Health Canada, which was poised to launch a campaign on second-hand smoke in the workplace.

"We knew that Heather and her story would have a much greater impact on the public than would statistics on second-hand smoke-related diseases and deaths," recalls Karen Dufton, Director of the mass media campaign.



Heather agreed to appear in advertisements because she wanted to protect other workers from suffering her fate.

**"I'm an innocent victim of second-hand smoke"**

Heather Crowe



**"Waiters and waitresses don't have second-class lungs. There's no reason why we should have second-class protection for our health."**



**OVER 11 MILLION CANADIANS DO NOT HAVE A SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE**

**ONE THOUSAND CANADIANS DIE EACH YEAR FROM SECOND-HAND SMOKE**

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Cornwall Standard Freeholder Jan 11, 2003 courtesy EOHU

Heather knew she needed help. She contacted a lawyer to help her file a worker's compensation claim, and then called health agencies for scientific research to support her case. One of the first people she called was Cynthia Callard of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, a group active in the campaigns to ban smoking in public places.

While Heather waited for her compensation claim ruling, she began public campaigning for better laws to protect hospitality workers. During this period, many cities were in the process of introducing bans on smoking in public places.

When Heather stood to speak, you could hear a pin drop.



**"Toxic Hell" - Talking about Chemo**  
Heather Crowe

**"My name is Heather Crowe and I'm a waitress. I am dying of lung cancer caused by second-hand smoke."**

"Heather demonstrated her power to transform an issue and to help people connect with it," recalls Cynthia Callard.

By early October, Health Canada was ready to air the "Heather" ad. The campaign ran for four weeks and featured a television commercial and advertisements in transit shelters across the country.

On the day of the launch, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board accepted Heather's compensation claim, setting a precedent for workers across Canada.

The ruling generated intense media coverage and many Canadians learned for the first time that second-hand smoke was a serious occupational health hazard.



**"I have to do this" - No one can travel the road for you, you have to travel the road and the cancer road is a scary one.**

Heather Crowe with Barb Tarbox  
Reprinted with permission  
The Edmonton Journal March 18, 03.  
Photo by Brian Gavrilloff.

**"We could not have predicted how dramatically the events unfolded."**

Heather's story, her advocacy, and Health Canada's advertising campaign sparked intense public debate on smoke-free laws.

Heather's struggle brought together institutions, governments and regions, as though customary barriers didn't exist. Health charities, citizens' groups, health practitioners and governments were united in a single cause.

For decades, second-hand smoke was viewed as an inconvenience and a matter of courtesy. Through Heather's story, Canadians learned that exposure to smoke can be deadly.

**FOLLOWING THE "HEATHER" CAMPAIGN, 89% OF CANADIANS SURVEYED SAID THAT NON-SMOKERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO A SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT - UP FROM 69% IN 2001.**

Bonita Communications: A review of public opinion research, March 2003

The Heather campaign is part of a five-year strategy targeting second-hand smoke in the home, workplace and among high-risk groups such as youth and Aboriginals. The second-hand smoke in the workplace campaign was the beginning of a consistent, integrated campaign - a first for Health Canada.



**"I have to get the message across to the public"** Heather Crowe

The goal of Health Canada's campaign is to reduce the number of places where second-hand smoke occurs and to make people aware of the risk to others.

Health Canada took a chance in running

the Heather ads at a time when many municipalities were debating the smoking bylaws.

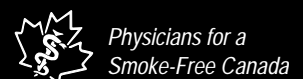
The Heather ad is considered one of the most effective campaigns ever launched by Health Canada.

"Heather's story has proven to us the value of testimonials, the power of an integrated campaign, and the need to sometimes take risks," says Karen Dufton Health Canada.



Some tobacco companies say second-hand smoke bothers people. Health Canada says it kills. Refuse to be a target.

1-800-0-Canada (1-800-622-6232)  
TTY: 1-800-465-7735 [www.GoSmokefree.ca](http://www.GoSmokefree.ca)



1-800-540-5418  
[www.smoke-free.ca](http://www.smoke-free.ca)