



The Igniting Hope Conference

Friday, November 15, 2024



Fondation
Brain Canada
Foundation



Conference At-a-Glance

On November 15th, 2024, Brain Canada Foundation, in partnership with RBC Future Launch, hosted a knowledge exchange event at the McCain Complex Care & Recovery Building in Toronto, Ontario. The Igniting Hope Conference welcomed over 70 youth leaders, researchers, policymakers, clinicians and other stakeholders from the youth mental health community, including members from Health Canada, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Azrieli Foundation, Kids Help Phone, Erika Legacy Foundation, Jack.org, National Youth Action Council, and more. Attendees and speakers alike engaged in a dynamic, energetic and informative day-long conversation around key issues impacting youth and their mental health (see Appendix A on page 14). This discourse illuminated all stakeholders in the room about the state of youth mental health care and services in Canada, the need for the whole spectrum of youth mental health stakeholders to be better connected, from research to implementation and beyond, and what youth can do to make a tangible difference on all these factors at the policy level.

Co-organized by youth leader Raissa Amany, Executive Director of the Young Canadians Roundtable on Health, and Kate Shingler, Senior Director, Strategic Communications at Brain Canada, the event was developed, from its inception to incorporate the perspectives and needs of various stakeholders while remaining focused on youth. In fact, the adaptation of the Brain Canada logo for the event was designed by panelist Vidhi Desai, a recognized mental health advocate who contributes to several youth mental health and policy initiatives through her illustrations.

The conference provided a forum for young people in attendance to express their thoughts, feelings and concerns about the state of youth mental health in Canada while having the opportunity to engage in bi-directional learning with researchers, policymakers, clinicians, and leaders of mental health-focused organizations.



Cover illustration by: Vidhi Desai
Illustrations by: Liisa Sorsa

“Your event was spectacular, so rich in knowledge and exchange; I returned home with hope ignited and so many ideas on how we could evolve in youth mental health.”

Audrey Joyal
Mental Health Commission
of Canada

Overview

The event opened with a thoughtful land acknowledgement and blessing by Grey Cloud (James Carpenter), an Indigenous Traditional Healer and Oshkabewis (Helper) with First Nations ancestry, who set the tone for the day. With the beat of his drum, he reminded attendees of the first song we all hear; our mother's heartbeat, which connects us to all beings and spirit beings that we have a relationship with. He acknowledged that the hardest journey is the one from our hearts to our minds, and from our minds to our hearts.

Raissa Amany then provided attendees with a Safer Space Acknowledgement that highlighted the importance of respecting each other's physical/emotional boundaries, respective identities and backgrounds, while fostering a sense of self-awareness. This was followed by remarks from Brain Canada's CEO and President, Viviane Poupon, and a word from the sponsor, RBC Foundation, with a brief address from Paula Murphy-Ives, Managing Director of Social Capital & Impact at RBC.

Next, participants heard from Dr. Jo Henderson, co-lead of the Canadian Youth Mental Health Insight (CYMHI) Platform funded through the Brain Canada Youth Mental Health Platform, powered by RBC Future Launch, with support from Power Corporation of Canada. Dr. Henderson provided an overview of the project, which will leverage data integration, open data, machine learning and improved communication between different youth mental health sectors to provide an informatics platform that will ultimately reduce the burden of illness and improve quality of life for young people in Canada.

Dr. Henderson explained the integral role that youth not only played in the development of the grant proposal submitted to Brain Canada but their ongoing engagement as leaders within the project itself. Dr. Henderson described the complex challenges of understanding the needs and goals of young people and how learning about the conditions under which youth are willing and motivated to share their data has been a driving factor in the development of the CYMHI Platform. A youth-centred governance framework which places young people in leadership positions within the platform team is now a central piece of their work to date. Through these efforts and a number of consultations with youth across Canada, key values that young people prioritize emerged, including youth co-creation, autonomy, accountability, representation, trust, mitigating harm, and more. In line with these factors, Dr. Henderson highlighted the need for a robust and transparent feedback loop when involving young people in research.

"Stop extracting from youth and start engaging with them."

Dr. Jo Henderson

Scientific Director of the Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and co-lead of the CYMHI Platform.

All in all, the CYMHI Platform aims to directly benefit young people, service providers and other stakeholders by providing: (1) a personalized services recommender that will offer young people information on which services may work best for them, based on data inputted into the platform from other youth with similar profiles, (2) access to precision predictive models that will use data from the platform to organically inform youth and service providers of the most current research for the difficulties they or their patients are facing, and (3) a national youth mental health atlas that will provide youth and governments with access to community-based information that can be used as an educational tool for young people while encouraging evidence-based policy changes for policymakers.

Dr. Henderson's presentation concluded with a dynamic Q&A from attendees who wanted real-life examples of how the platform will one day be used by youth and service providers. In short, Dr. Henderson explained that they are currently working with young people through an iterative process to determine what this will look like, but the goal is to ensure that the mechanisms put in place are adaptable and sensitive to the changing needs of youth in Canada. Ultimately, Dr. Henderson envisions the CYMHI Platform mimicking how people in Canada go about getting an oil change or making a dentist appointment – but for mental health services.

Following an introduction from Brain Canada Chair, Dr. Naomi Azrieli, keynote speaker Senator Stanley Kutcher engaged the audience in a meaningful conversation about how the Senate works and how young people in Canada can connect with decision-makers including politicians and senators to ensure their voices are heard, and ultimately impact decisions being made on federal legislation. He explained that senators have the responsibility of studying and voting on every piece of legislation and, because of this, they are well positioned to move the needle at the policy level.

Senator Kutcher encouraged young people to come together as constituents with a united voice and advocate for one to two priorities that they feel are important for the Senate and Government of Canada to address because, after all, the louder the voice, the better. He explained that letters by mail are often more effective than email as a mode of communication to senators and highlighted the importance of engaging with political leaders that are sympathetic to youth mental health challenges.

During the discussion period, attendees addressed the difficulties being faced across Canada with the lack of federal legislation uptake at the provincial and territorial level. Senator Kutcher agreed that this was a major barrier but expressed three strategies that young people can use when trying to create political willingness to implement federal legislation: (1) "moral-suasion", which is the notion of persuading leaders using rhetorical appeals in a non-coercive way, (2) having the voice of young people championed by a Minister of Parliament (e.g., Ministers Saks and Holland) at federal-provincial-territorial meetings where issues like youth mental health are discussed among health ministers, and (3) voting for a Government that is sympathetic to these topics because this will determine the national, provincial and territorial openness to adopting federal legislation.

"As senators, we are able to nudge the ship of state to try to do things differently... This is why the voices and advocacy of young people are vital to the Senate in pushing things forward."

Senator Stanley Kutcher

Following the conversation with Senator Kutcher, Melissa Russo, Senior Program Manager at Brain Canada introduced the first of two panels for the day. She explained that the topics of both panels, school-based mental health and integrated mental health and substance use were selected based on the results of a workshop held by Brain Canada and RBC in 2020. These issues were among priorities perceived by participants to be the greatest challenges in the youth mental health sector in Canada at that time. The questions, format and direction of each panel were determined through a co-creation exercise with Melissa, Raissa Amany and the members of each panel.

The first panel entitled “From Screens to School: Building a Resilient Mind in a Connected World” was moderated by Dr. Sanjeev Sockalingam, who guided panelists Raissa Amany, Vidhi Desai, Chris Dietzel, Nicole D’souza, and Brendan McFatridge (consult Appendix B on page 18) for more information on the panel members) in a conversation around what it means to be a young person in a digitally connected world. Key takeaways from this panel include:

- Digital connectiveness is the “third space”, existing alongside school and home, that make up the physical spaces in which young people live. This digital space presents risks, but also opportunities for which a rights-and-responsibility-based approach should be taken, instead of an avoidance-based one.
- The lines between online and offline lives can easily and frequently become blurred. Given this, when it comes to digital connectedness and mental health, there is a need to learn how to set healthy boundaries so that young people can live healthily in all three spaces.
- Schools have a responsibility to help build the digital safety and literacy competencies of young people through their curricula, which must be centred on equity-based approaches to learning. In line with this, there should be a shift away from the shame of being digitally connected and, instead, move the conversation towards how to harness the positive aspects of this third space connectedness.

“Bridging the Gap: Integrated Approaches to Mental Health and Substance Use,” the second panel of the day, focused on the ideology of stigma, the treatment landscape and research ethics in this space. Moderated by Shauna Cronin, panelists Atika Juristia, Stacie Smith and Dr. Aristotle Voineskos (consult Appendix B for more details) engaged in a lively discussion about mental health, substance use and stigma across Canada and the importance of research and evidence-based care in this context. The key takeaways from this panel are:

- The need for this conversation to be less about destigmatization and more about empowerment – especially when it comes to substance use. For example, discrimination against women is called sexism and discrimination against different races is called racism, but when it comes to drug use, there is no term to describe the discrimination drug users are faced with for having altered states of consciousness. Instead, there is a hyper-focus on the need for drug users to abstain versus empowering them to make informed and evidence-based choices about their drug use through harm reduction, the former possibly contributing to the drug use crisis in Canada.
- While it was acknowledged that this may be specific to urban areas of the country, panelists also shared that they felt a relative improvement in Canada when it comes to openness around mental health and allowing young people to have decision-making power over their care. That said, there is a need to have people with lived and living experience and expertise in mental health disorders sit at the table to inform policy and be valued leaders embedded in research. That way, the landscape of mental health in Canada can be built on the voices it is directly impacting.
- Getting evidence to practice is a multi-year endeavour that requires funds and support from the government and research-funding bodies in Canada. We should be learning from other countries who are integrating mental health and substance use research, care and services well so that we, as a country, can offer solutions that are all-encompassing, and not siloed based on individually treated but co-occurring diagnoses.

“What became clear to me from both panels is that there’s a need for a crucial shift away from asking “what’s the matter with you?” towards asking “what matters to you?”

Nicole D’souza

Panelist and embedded researcher at Jack.org.

Next, Dr. Patricia Conrod, Clinical Psychologist and Full Professor of Psychiatry at the Université de Montréal, joined by Research Assistant, Melissa Figueiredo, presented about research that evaluated the implementation of a learning platform that offers personalized approaches to cognitive-behavioural interventions and workshops to adolescents called PreVenture. Based on the fact that certain traits (impulsiveness, anxiety sensitivity, hopelessness, sensation-seeking, etc.) are predictors of substance use if they are not provided environments in which those traits can thrive, Dr. Conrod explained the importance of personality-targeted interventions that teach young people how to create an environment for themselves to positively foster these traits. Building from the success of the PreVenture program, Dr. Conrod and team developed the UniVenture program, which aims to implement a psychosocial intervention that promotes the mental health and well-being of undergraduate students in Canada and reduce substance abuse within Canadian universities. During the discussion, it was also acknowledged that there is a need for academic institutions to address environmental stressors that may be contributing to alcohol and substance use, especially at the post-secondary education level.

“The conversations and opportunities for knowledge exchange like we had at this event are important components to really listening to and learning from each other.”

Viviane Poupon
CEO & President
Brain Canada



Finally, the day concluded with a Fireside Chat moderated by Raissa Amany with speakers Katie Jensen, founder of Vocal Fry Studios and host of Brain Canada's English podcast, *Playing with Marbles*, and Chris Maksylewicz, the Executive Director of The Erika Legacy Foundation, about the role of storytelling as medicine. Katie and Chris shared how storytelling has had a personal impact on their lives and discussed how it is the purest way to connect with people and help convey an idea or demonstrate impact. In the context of using storytelling as a research method, it was emphasized that researchers should avoid "parachuting in" and, instead, put in place protective mechanisms for research participants, or storytellers, that allow them access to co-authorship and compensation. It was also stated that people's stories should be treated as intellectual property and that storytellers should be provided with a safe space to control their own narrative, with researchers taking on the role of supporter and champion. Attendees also discussed that equally important to storytelling is story listening, and that there is a need to listen with care and good intention while embracing any discomfort that may arise while listening.

When attendees were asked about their learnings from the day and what they hoped to see as next steps, the following themes emerged:

- We need to shift the focus from what is wrong with you to what do you need to thrive.
- We need to embrace the full spectrum of treatment for mental health and substance use and lead with harm reduction over abstinence.
- We need to stop extracting information from young people through research without including them meaningfully throughout the process.
- We need to understand the positive aspects of digital connectedness and educate young people about them. We also need to teach mental health literacy early on.
- We need to ensure every person in Canada has access to the full package of mental health care and services.
- We need to continue conversations like those from the Igniting Hope Conference and stay connected.

The exchange that took place throughout the day was recorded in a visual representation by Liisa Sorsa of ThinkLink Graphics. Liisa listened and drew out the conversations and talks that took place, creating a visual artifact in real-time that participants reflected on throughout the conference. Please see the two pieces she created in Appendix C. To see Liisa's work in action alongside highlights from the day captured through video, [click here](#).

During the lunch break and at the closing reception, K. Zimmer, a self-described "multiply disabled multidisciplinary artist" played two piano concerts in the atrium outside the auditorium for attendees. An inpatient at CAMH, K received permission from her doctor to take part in the conference through these performances on November 15. Brain Canada worked with Workman Arts, a multidisciplinary arts organization that promotes a greater understanding of mental health and addiction issues through creation and presentation, to secure an artist with lived experience to take part in the event.

The Igniting Hope Conference fostered open, honest and transparent discourse about youth mental health in Canada. It enabled connections to be made amongst attendees who otherwise may have never had a chance to be in the same room together. It alerted participants to the difficult realities being faced by youth and facilitated a collective acknowledgement that there is still a lot of work to be done in this sector, but it also left them with a sense of hope for the possibility of positive change and action.

"The worst thing you can do is parachute in, ask a young person to be vulnerable and bare their soul to you, say thank you and walk away."

Katie Jensen
Host of Brain Canada's *Playing with Marbles* podcast.









Appendix A



Igniting Hope Conference

Agenda

9:00 a.m.

Land Acknowledgement

James Carpenter, Grey Cloud

9:15 a.m.

Safer Space Acknowledgement

Raissa Amany, Young Canadians Roundtable on Health

9:20 a.m.

Welcome

Viviane Poupon, Brain Canada

9:25 a.m.

A Word from the Sponsor: RBC Future Launch

Wayne Bossert, RBC

9:30 a.m.

Opening Remarks

The Honourable Ya'ara Saks, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health

9:35 - 10:40 a.m.

Plenary and Q&A: *Canadian Youth Mental Health Insight Platform*

Jo Henderson, CAMH

10:40 a.m.

Health Break

10:45 a.m.

A Word from the Chair

Naomi Azrieli, O.C., Brain Canada

10:50 - 11:15 a.m.

Morning Discourse & Q&A

Understanding Mental Health: Reflections on What We Could Have Done Better

Senator Stanley Kutcher



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11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Panel 1 & Q&A

From Screens to School: Building a Resilient Mind in a Connected World

Introduced by Melissa Russo, Brain Canada

Moderator: Sanjeev Sockalingam - Panelists: Raissa Amany, Vidhi Desai, Chris Dietzel, Nicole D'souza and Brendan McFatridge

12:15 - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch Break

1:00 - 2:15 p.m.

Panel 2 & Q&A

Bridging the Gap: Integrated Approaches to Mental Health and Substance Use

Introduced by Melissa Russo, Brain Canada

Moderator: Shauna Cronin - Panelists: Atika Juristia, Stacie Smith and Aristotle Voineskos

2:15 - 2:50 p.m.

Afternoon Discourse and Q&A

Youth Perspectives on Evidence-based Interventions to Reduce Substance Use and Misuse

Patricia Conrod, Université de Montréal

2:50 p.m.

Health Break

3:00 - 3:40 p.m.

Fireside Chat and Q&A

Storytelling as Medicine

Moderator: Raissa Amany - Speakers: Chris Maksylewicz and Katie Jensen

3:40 - 4:00 p.m.

Reflections of the Day

Facilitated by Raissa Amany

4:00 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Viviane Poupon, Brain Canada

4:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Reception

Appendix B





Igniting Hope Conference



James Carpenter Indigenous Knowledge Holder

James Carpenter is a recognized Indigenous Traditional Healer and Oshkabewis (Helper). His First Nations Ancestry is from the Anishnaabek/Mississauga First Nation of Alderville, Chippewa ancestry from the Traditional territory around the Great Lakes, Oneida ancestry from Upper New York State and the Cree Nation from the shores of James Bay. He continues to reclaim his Anishnaabek/Chipewyan and Cree languages. James specializes in providing Indigenous Traditional Healing Services and Sacred Indigenous Ceremonies to children, families and communities.



Raissa Amany Young Canadians Roundtable on Health

Raissa Amany is a national award-winning social activist, speaker and consultant recognized for her work in youth engagement in health. As Executive Director of the Young Canadians Roundtable on Health, she leads national advocacy with over 70 youths. Beyond pediatrics, Raissa is a prominent youth expert in child and youth mental health and addictions where she serves on numerous national and provincial advisory boards and councils, including Kids Help Phone's National Youth Council and the Standards Council of Canada's working group for Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions. A Health Sciences student at the University of Ottawa, Raissa was recently named one of the 2024 Top 25 Women of Influence.



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Viviane Poupon Brain Canada

Brain Canada President and CEO Viviane Poupon is committed to addressing gaps in the Canadian brain research landscape, especially in the areas of mental health research, platform support and capacity building through early-career funding and talent retention. Her leadership has been integral to the foundation's mission to accelerate, amplify and fund brain research across Canada. Viviane's tenure at Brain Canada has been marked by a focus on fostering partnerships and collaborations between research silos. Through her

thoughtful guidance, Brain Canada is making significant strides in advancing our knowledge of the brain. With more than 100 partners and \$400 million invested in brain research to date, Brain Canada is the leading brain research funder and convenor in the country.



Wayne Bossert RBC

As Deputy Chairman and Global Head of Ultra High Net Worth Clients and Canadian Private Banking, Wayne Bossert oversees RBC's market presence and support for top clients and families.

His role includes guiding clients on business, family strategy and wealth transition. Joining RBC in 1987, Mr. Bossert held leadership roles across the Prairies, Montreal and Toronto, with his first executive role in 1999. He became Regional President for the Atlantic Provinces in 2001 and later Senior Vice President in

Toronto, overseeing client service and fulfillment. As Executive Vice President and Head of Sales, he led RBC's 25,000+ sales force nationwide. He serves on the boards of RBC Global Asset Management and Royal Trust and chairs Trillium Health Partners.



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Jo Henderson Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

As Scientific Director of the Margaret and Wallace McCain Centre for Child, Youth and Family Mental Health at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Jo Henderson leads research and initiatives to improve mental health outcomes for young people and their families. Henderson is also a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto and the executive director of Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario. Their research focuses on improving service delivery and access for youth with substance use, mental health or concurrent disorders, through youth and family engagement, collaborative models and knowledge exchange. They lead several federally funded projects to enhance youth mental health and substance use care.



Naomi Azrieli Azrieli Foundation

As Chair and CEO of the Azrieli Foundation, the largest public foundation in Canada, for nearly two decades Naomi Azrieli has led initiatives in healthcare, science, education and community. She created programs like the Azrieli Fellows Program, the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence and the Holocaust Survivor Memoirs Program and has collaborated with institutions nationwide. Naomi chairs the Foundation's Investment Committee, is President of Canpro Investments Ltd. and serves as a Director of the Azrieli Group Ltd. She also chairs Brain Canada, expanding brain research and supporting programs like the CIFAR Azrieli Global Scholars Program. Recognized with France's Legion of Honor and as an Officer of the Order of Canada, she is a passionate advocate for neurodiverse individuals, caregivers and Holocaust survivors.



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Stanley Kutcher Senator

Senator Stan Kutcher, an internationally renowned psychiatrist in adolescent mental health, is a leader in research, education, advocacy, policy and service innovation. Previously at the University of Toronto and Dalhousie University, where he held key leadership roles, he led the development of Canada's national child and youth mental health framework (Evergreen). His award-winning research spans neurobiology, treatments for youth mental disorders and innovative mental health care systems. His recent focus includes primary care interventions and mental health literacy in schools and universities, always prioritizing evidence-based practices for rapid access to effective care.



Sanjeev Sockalingam Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Sanjeev Sockalingam is Senior VP of Education, Chief Medical Officer and Senior Scientist at CAMH, and a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto. He co-leads ECHO Ontario Mental Health, a virtual knowledge-sharing network for mental health capacity-building and serves as Scientific Director of Obesity Canada. With over 15 years in mental health and integrated care leadership, he has directed initiatives like the Medical Psychiatry Alliance and Canada's largest bariatric surgery program at UHN. Author of 240+ publications, his research focuses on mental health capacity-building through technology and integrated obesity and mental health care.



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Vidhi Desai University of Calgary and Book Illustrator

Vidhi Desai is a recognized mental health advocate and panelist who contributes to several youth mental health and policy initiatives through her illustrations. She is the illustrator of several books and regularly does graphic work for non-profit organizations who serve to increase mental health awareness in Canada. Outside of these commitments, she also serves as the EDI Director for her faculty at the University of Calgary. Her efforts for working towards SDG 3 (good health and well-being) have been recognized by the Alberta

Council for Global Cooperation. Vidhi illustrated the Igniting Hope visual for this event.



Chris Dietzel McGill University

Christopher Dietzel, Ph.D. (he/him), is a researcher focused on the intersections of gender, sexuality, health, safety and technology. He co-investigates the Digitally Informed Youth (DIY) project, addressing online harms among Canadian youth and develops resources to ensure safe digital and offline experiences. Dietzel also contributes to projects at Concordia, McGill and Dalhousie universities.

Overall, Dietzel is interested in understanding the barriers, harms and violence that people face when using digital platforms, particularly among LGBTQ+ people and other marginalized communities.

Resources

The DIGS Lab



The iMPACTS Project



DYI: Digital Safety





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Nicole D'souza University of Toronto

Nicole D'souza is an applied health researcher with extensive experience in youth mental health. Currently an embedded researcher at Jack.org and a postdoctoral fellow at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, she brings a specialized focus on decolonial, community-driven approaches to mental health promotion.

D'souza's research centers on addressing the social determinants of mental health through innovative social prescribing initiatives, connecting young people with social and cultural supports. Her work also includes the design and evaluation of community-based mental health programs tailored to the needs of equity-deserving youth.



Brendan McFatridge Honours Neuroscience Student, University of Alberta

Brendan McFatridge is a psychology, mental health and neuroscience enthusiast from Edmonton, Alberta. After graduating as valedictorian, Brendan began studying at the University of Alberta with ambitions to become a physician. In May 2024, he was named one of Canada's top 10 youth changemakers by Children First Canada for his advocacy supporting the mental health of LGBTQ+ athletes in youth sports.

As one of the first openly gay athletes drafted into the Western Hockey League, Brendan understands the unique challenges that LGBTQ+ youth face in sports and proudly shares his experiences to help others. Brendan's passion for mental health is deeply personal and he is always willing to share about his own mental health struggles and triumphs.



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Shauna Cronin Frayme

Shauna Cronin is a partnership development expert with 20 years of experience in large-scale system transformation and social impact. She has led the development of national and provincial networks involving hundreds of partnerships, including Canada's integrated youth services and is skilled in equity-based system design and integrating lived experience into practice. Shauna supports Global Leadership in mental health with GLE and was most recently CEO of Frayme, a national nonprofit advancing sustainable mental health solutions across Canada. She has also worked at CAMH and at the federal level to foster collaboration and transform systems. Bilingual in English and French, Shauna holds an M.A. and an Executive Leadership Certification from Rotman School of Management.



Atika Juristia J Healthcare Initiative

Atika Juristia, a young harm-reduction practitioner, founded a nonprofit focused on empowering drug users' healthcare choices. Rising from the challenges of being a first-gen immigrant, extreme poverty and unstable housing, she uses her lived experiences to drive her leadership. Atika's organization has reached over 174,000 students and sponsored more than 3,000 hours of harm-reduction projects, preparing future leaders to act on the crisis. Her groundbreaking report was presented at the UN's session, marked the historic inclusion of 'harm reduction' in their resolution.

Locally, she wrote a policy brief for the study on the Toxic Drug Crisis, which gained over 70 co-signatories—the most signed brief in that study. This advocacy led to two major policy consolidations which can positively impact over seven million Canadians.



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Stacie Smith Mount Saint Vincent University

Stacie Smith is an award-winning children and youth health advocate from Saint John, NB. She holds a Kinesiology degree from Dalhousie University (2020) and an Education degree from the University of New Brunswick (2022). Currently pursuing her Master's in Education at Mount Saint Vincent University, Stacie has served in various roles with the Young Canadians Roundtable on Health, including as former Executive Director. She is the Education Outreach Specialist for Children First Canada and Youth Engagement

Coordinator for Nourish Nova Scotia. Recently, she co-chaired the Youth Advisory Council for the NB Child and Youth Advocate's youth mental health review. Stacie is passionate about school food, food insecurity, youth mental health and youth engagement.



Aristotle Voineskos Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Aristotle Voineskos is Senior Vice President, Research and Science and Director of the Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute at CAMH. He also serves as joint Vice President for the CAMH-UHN partnership and is a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine. Internationally recognized as a researcher and leader in mental health, Voineskos has improved care access, reduced wait times and advanced evidence-based models across the health system. At CAMH, he expanded research through equity, clinical integration, digital transformation and sustainability. As CAMH-UHN VP, he leads efforts in integrated physical and mental health care.



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Patricia Conrod Université de Montréal

Patricia Conrod is a Clinical Psychologist and Full Professor of Psychiatry at the Université de Montréal. Based at the CHU Sainte-Justine Mother and Child Hospital Research Centre, she holds a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Preventive Mental Health and Addiction and a Research Chair in Social and Community Pediatrics. She co-directs Centre IMAGINE, a pediatric brain imaging research center.

Her research examines cognitive, personality and biological risk factors in drug abuse and the overlap of addictive behaviors with other mental disorders. Dr. Conrod also co-directs the FRQS Quebec Research Network on Suicide, Mood Disorders and leads the SENSUM initiative. She was a panelist for the Canadian Government's review of the Cannabis Act, published in April 2024.



Katie Jensen Editor of *Playing with Marbles*, Brain Canada's podcast

Katie Jensen is an audio storyteller and the founder of Vocal Fry Studios, based in Toronto. Over the years, she has developed and produced a variety of podcasts, working with high-profile organizations such as CBC, Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, The Globe and Mail, Indigo Books and Canadaland. At 36-year-old, Katie lives with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which can make everyday activities like going out in public a source of anxiety. Diagnosed with OCD as a child, Katie recently produced the third season of Brain

Canada's popular podcast, *Playing with Marbles*, which focuses on youth mental health.



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Chris Maksylewicz The Erika Legacy Foundation

Chris Maksylewicz is an educator, scholar, entrepreneur, award-winning content creator and storyteller. He is the Executive Director of The Erika Legacy Foundation, a national charity focused on suicide and mental health issues. Under his leadership, the foundation funds research on the brain and body while studying social, personal and economic conditions leading to suicide, using these findings to drive effective prevention. Chris has been pivotal in the foundation's success, leveraging his expertise in strategic planning, storytelling and branding. Previously, he founded Mad Hatter

Marketing, specializing in engaging branding, marketing and events, and is a sought-after speaker on leadership and creativity. Outside of work, Chris is a pop culture collector, mentor and content creator.





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