



## **Canada's Premiers Announce Recipients of the Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care**

**OTTAWA, October 18, 2022** – Canada's Premiers today announced the recipients of the Council of the Federation (COF) Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care. Presented in each province and territory for innovative initiatives that positively impact mental health and addictions care, the award recognizes individuals and organizations excelling in the field.

The recipients of the Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care are:

- **Day Treatment Mental Health and Addictions Program – Kainai Wellness Centre (Blood Tribe Department of Health)** – Alberta
- **Cherokee Bent** – British Columbia
- **KIDTHINK Children's Mental Health Centre Inc.** – Manitoba
- **St. John's Status of Women Council Managed Alcohol Program** – Newfoundland and Labrador
- **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Tele-Counselling for Family Caregivers – Dr. Pamela Durepos, Nicole Cormier, Chandra MacBean** – New Brunswick
- **Supporting Wellbeing** – Northwest Territories
- **Strongest Families Institute, SFI Companion App** – Nova Scotia
- **Mary Ugyuk** – Nunavut
- **The Path Home – LOFT (Leap of Faith Together) Community Service** – Ontario
- **Peer Support Program, Canadian Mental Health Association – PEI Division** – Prince Edward Island
- **Équipe-toi : accompagne un proche en santé mentale** – Québec
- **Mentally Safe Minecraft Server (MS<sup>2</sup>) - CMHA-SK** – Saskatchewan
- **Chris Spencer** – Yukon

“On behalf of all Premiers, I extend congratulations to the recipients of this award for their diligent and innovative work in the field of mental health and addictions care,” said Heather Stefanson, Manitoba Premier and COF Chair. “It is critical that we continue to have open conversations on mental health and how to best support the many Canadians who are impacted by mental health challenges.”

Each award recipient will receive a certificate, signed by the Premier of their province or territory, as well as a \$5,000 prize to advance the awarded initiative and foster further innovation.

The Council of the Federation comprises all 13 provincial and territorial Premiers. It enables Premiers to work collaboratively, form closer ties, foster constructive relationships among governments, and show leadership on important issues that matter to Canadians.

## **BACKGROUNDER: AWARD RECIPIENT INFORMATION**

### **Recipients of the COF Award for Innovation in Mental Health and Addictions Care**

#### **Day Treatment Mental Health and Addictions Program – Kainai Wellness Centre (Blood Tribe Department of Health) – Alberta**

Blood Tribe members have been affected by opioid and other substance use in the community. The Day Treatment Mental Health and Addictions Program, founded in 2014, involves a qualified team, innovative approaches that address deep rooted issues, the wisdom of elders and knowledge keepers, and traditional ceremonies as part of their approach. The program is designed to provide awareness, education, and support to those who are suffering with illicit substance and alcohol use disorders who are not attending residential treatment programs. Clients acquire a variety of skills to cope with drug and alcohol related urges. The program shares resources on several key topics: addiction awareness, physiology of addiction, relapse prevention, grief and loss, trauma, compassion fatigue, anger management, healthy parenting, healthy relationships, and coping techniques, among others. To date, over 341 participants have benefitted from this program, and there has been healing at the individual, family and community level.

#### **Cherokee Bent – British Columbia**

Cherokee Bent was born on the unceded and traditional lands of the Nlaka'pamux people. At 18 years old, Cherokee felt called through her cultural teachings to become a leader in Vancouver's mental health and substance use recovery communities, with involvement in both adult and youth treatment centres. Through her work with Vancouver Coastal Health, Cherokee has designed and delivered curricula to healthcare providers about providing culturally safe care to youth who use substances and teaching healthcare providers how to better work with Indigenous youth from rural and remote communities. Cherokee has co-written and starred in an educational film used to teach healthcare workers about using cultural safety and humility when working with people who use substances.

#### **KIDTHINK Children's Mental Health Centre Inc. – Manitoba**

KIDTHINK provides a model of care that includes psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, occupational therapists, and other professionals to create a truly multi-disciplinary team that works together to give children and their families the highest standard of care. Within the Client Care Subsidy Program, the KIDTHINK multi-disciplinary clinical team provides approximately 13 hours of no-cost, evidence-based mental health intervention for children ages 12 and under and their families who are low-income status. This includes providing services for a variety of mild to moderate social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. Mental health disorders or challenges addressed include, but are not limited to, anxiety, depression, behavioural disorders, ADHD and learning difficulties/disabilities. KIDTHINK recognizes the importance of reducing barriers to accessing mental health services, the focus is on providing timely and preventative interventions by offering services to children with or without a diagnosis.

### **St. John's Status of Women Council Managed Alcohol Program (MAP) – Newfoundland and Labrador**

The Managed Alcohol Program in Newfoundland and Labrador is a pilot that began in 2021. The program operates within the St. John's Status of Women Council to assist women and nonbinary individuals who experience risks and harms related to alcohol use. MAP's harm reduction approach provides a safe and stable supply of alcohol to participants, along with social and healthcare support. MAP works with Eastern Health to assess participant eligibility, determine a safe dose of alcohol, and provide ongoing reassessment and primary healthcare services. While managed alcohol programs are increasingly recognized as valuable tools, the St. John's Status of Women Council's MAP is unique in its focus on women and nonbinary individuals and offers an innovative mix of outreach delivery, residential programming, and satellite site pick-up alongside research and learning. In addition to direct benefits to participants, MAP shares learnings from this pilot widely with the aim to increase managed alcohol services across other organizations and for more populations. MAP has created a model of collaboration across services that can set an example for others interested in pursuing similar work.

### **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Tele-Counselling for Family Caregivers – Dr. Pamela Durepos, Nicole Cormier, Chandra MacBean – New Brunswick**

The Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) Tele-counselling for family caregivers of a person living with dementia in New Brunswick was developed and launched by Dr. Pamela Durepos of the University of New Brunswick, and Nicole Cormier and Chandra MacBean of the Alzheimer Society of New Brunswick. The ACT tele-counselling program is also the first ACT program for caregivers of persons with dementia in Canada and its overall aim is to improve access to high quality mental health services (e.g., psychotherapy) for all caregivers of persons with dementia in Canada. More specifically, ACT is an individualized program that screens participants for current depression, anxiety, and stress levels in order to identify persons who cannot wait for therapy and may require immediate mental health care. This service is provided in both official languages at no cost using technology (such as telephone, text, or videoconference) in order to reduce barriers to access and to assess whether participants are assigned to receive usual care or the ACT program. ACT is an acceptance and mindfulness-based form of psychotherapy different from cognitive behavioural therapy. ACT has proven effective at reducing depression and anxiety and in increasing acceptance and psychological flexibility. A study to evaluate the potential benefits and feasibility of providing ACT tele-counselling to caregivers is underway. The program is expected to expand beyond New Brunswick.

### **Supporting Wellbeing – Northwest Territories**

Supporting Wellbeing (SWB) is a training program being developed by an Indigenous mental health expert with the aim of providing tools for land-based program providers. Led by a Steering Committee of on the land (OTL) leaders, the program will better prepare OTL providers to mitigate and respond to mental health challenges in remote environments. Given the prevalence of trauma experienced because of colonization, it is not uncommon for participants (and staff) to experience mental health challenges while on the land. During training, OTL leaders will learn about topics related to the planning and delivery of trauma informed OTL programs, including intergenerational trauma, suicide intervention, conflict resolution, and participant aftercare. After completing the training, OTL leaders will be better equipped to support people in distress, mitigate risks, and decrease burnout. This, in turn, will improve participants' ability to safely engage in and benefit from OTL programs. SWB will strengthen OTL programs across the NWT, increase the emotional intelligence of community members, enhance community capacity for mutual support, and further the resurgence of Indigenous cultures, languages, and ways of being.

### **Strongest Families Institute, SFI Companion App – Nova Scotia**

Strongest Families Institute, based in Lower Sackville, is an award-winning charity whose focus on innovation and research has led to pioneering a new way of delivering mental health programs that reduces waitlists and makes care more accessible. Strongest Families Institute provides bilingual evidence-based mental health services to children, youth, adults, and families using telephone coaching coupled with online or printed support materials. Their Companion App was developed to integrate with their e-mental health platform and enables clients to benefit from access to their online educational platforms even while working offline, helping to bridge the digital divide.

### **Mary Ugyuk – Nunavut**

Mary Ugyuk has been employed as Wellness Coordinator for Hamlet of Taloyoak since 2010. Initially mentoring youth and pre-natal health groups, Mary has worked to expand existing programs and to create new ones that benefit her community, including: Adult Drop In (a safe and sober meeting place seven evenings a week), Elder's Cabin, mobility scooters, a soup kitchen, an Elder and youth center, a summer on-the-land culture camp, an annual shoreline and community clean-up, a community volunteer annual Christmas dinner, "The Turkey Has Landed" Christmas frozen turkey and food voucher program, Lily Love and Elder Love programs, weekly Elder's tea and weekly Elder's Culture Day, Elder's driver program, and Elder's radio show. Mary has been instrumental in creating and driving community wellness programs from a local perspective, rather than a territorial or regional focus, with the unique onsite ability to adapt if adjustments are needed to ensure effective and functional program delivery.

### **The Path Home – LOFT (Leap of Faith Together) Community Service – Ontario**

LOFT (Leap of Faith Together) Community Services' "The Path Home" is a supportive housing model specializing in transitioning patients with complex needs back to their community. Piloted, tested, and expanded across the populations and geographies served by LOFT, this model is guided by two goals: addressing unmet needs and system gaps through working collaboratively with health system partners, and providing exceptional and specialized need-driven care that enables people to stay safely in the community. This innovative model of care is designed to support individuals facing complex mental health challenges, addiction, dementia, and responsive behaviours along with physical health and care needs who no longer need to be in the hospital, but continue to require ongoing care. The Path Home provides an opportunity for vulnerable individuals to live with dignity and is successful in reducing the number of Alternate Level of Care (ALC) rates in hospital.

### **Peer Support Program, Canadian Mental Health Association, PEI Division – Prince Edward Island**

The Peer Support Program, operated by CMHA PEI, assists individuals experiencing mental health and addictions issues by providing a trained mentor with lived experience and recovery history to lend support, guidance and inspire hope for others experiencing similar situations. This program currently employs peer support specialists who host peer support groups and one-on-one sessions, and accompany clients to appointments. The peer support specialists empathize with the struggle and emotional pain that may accompany mental illness and share their thoughts and insight on the path to recovery. They provide support to clients via advocacy, housing resources, suicide prevention, coping strategies, support groups and help to bridge the gap between the client and the available mental health services on PEI. The overall benefit to Islanders and Canadians is evident. While there are similar programs elsewhere in Canada, the success of the Peer Support Program on PEI serves as an example model for other provinces and territories.

### **Équipe-toi : accompagne un proche en santé mentale – Québec**

The Association québécoise des parents et amis de la personne atteinte de maladie mentale (AQPAMM) supports families and friends of people living with a mental health disorder. The Association quickly reacted to the conditions imposed by the pandemic to continue offering services and reach those affected, in particular those young people who were especially hard hit in this context. With the support of partners (Bell Let's Talk and the Foundation of Greater Montreal), AQPAMM has developed interactive online training tools available on mobile phones for young people aged 13 to 25, called "Équipe-toi: accompagne un proche en santé mentale" as well as training for youth workers, "Équipe-toi: accompagne un jeune en santé mentale". By focusing on young people's preferred means of communication and relying on innovative strategies such as peer-help and self-care, AQPAMM contributes to the development of knowledge in the field of mental health and offers tools to young people to help them cope with complex situations related to mental health.

### **Mentally Safe Minecraft Server (MS<sup>2</sup>) – CMHA-SK – Saskatchewan**

Mentally Safe Minecraft Server (MS<sup>2</sup>) is an interactive computer gaming program that combats cyber-bullying and its impact on mental health. Developed by the Saskatchewan division of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA-SK), MS<sup>2</sup> was created and programmed by Saskatchewan youth with lived mental health disorders and takes into account things that are both meaningful and triggering for them. Chats are monitored by CMHA-SK Youth Coaches, mental health workers from CMHA branches around the province, youth peer supporters, and volunteers. Chat areas allow youth to confidentially ask a mental health worker questions about mental health or where/how to access services. There are also Saskatchewan helplines added in the in-game. In addition, there is a space for virtual groups to convene and learn about mental health tools. A mental health tip appears on the corner of the MS<sup>2</sup> screen every ten minutes, and there are creative events to celebrate Mental Health Week and challenge players' creativity.

### **Chris Spencer – Yukon**

Chris Spencer is a passionate Whitehorse resident who cares about the mental health and wellness of their community. Chris founded the Yukon Disc-versity Guild, a disc golf club designed to be a safe space for women and the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community and youth. Chris chose to centre the club around disc golf for the sport's benefits of being out in nature, providing activity and socialisation for people who struggle with their mental wellness, and because of the low barriers of cost and fitness level to participate. Additional benefits from the creation of the club have been the development of new community role models who provide inspiration and hope for young people, safer outdoor spaces, and representation of healthy lifestyles for women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Chris also founded the "Feed your inner light" peer support group for people with diagnosed and undiagnosed eating disorders. Chris sits on Queer Yukon's advisory committee for non-binary and trans people and is also involved in the CMHA Reach Out Support Line.

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### **For more information:**

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