

JANUARY 16 & 17, 2012, VANCOUVER

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- All 17 Service Innovation Grant projects were represented.
- Communications and media training helped everyone raise awareness of the good work they do.
- A case study discussion examined sustainability issues.

BUILDING FROM WITHIN, BUILDING OUTREACH

On January 16, 2012, representatives from 17 different community-based projects addressing mental health and substance use came to Vancouver to gain strength from sharing stories and learning experiences. This marked the first time that the Community Action Initiative assembled its major grant recipients. It was a powerful experience that left us wanting to continue our conversations into the future.

Our event began with a welcome from one of our co-chairs, Barb Keith, who welcomed us to Coast Salish traditional territory. She confirmed the intent of the Knowledge Exchange: to give participants an opportunity to learn from many people, including each other, and to gain new insights to make their work even stronger, particularly in the area of collaboration. She also observed that the Community Action Initiative hoped to encourage participants to build relationships with each other which could extend into the future, as a source of mutual support.

Stephen Smith (BC Ministry of Health) then described the context for our work. He reminded us that one in five British Columbians are affected by mental illness, with significant costs to the health care sector. In 2008-2009, the provincial government allocated \$1.3 billion for mental health issues; and indirect costs amounted to \$6.6 billion in British Columbia. The impact of these costs suggest a need for new responses, including a change from a reactive, treatment-focused approach to a more proactive, preventative and sustainable one. Community groups are in an ideal position to take on preventative work, with their strong local connections and appreciation of local needs.



The Bill Reid Gallery was an inspiring place for our work together.

Stephen also introduced us to a new conceptualization: mental health should be viewed also from an asset-focused perspective. As an asset, mental health can be seen in more positive terms. Our emphasis changes when we see mental health as so much more than just the absence of mental illness. Good mental health improves productivity, enhances physical health, and reduces vulnerability to mental illness and substance abuse, among others. The BC government's *Healthy Minds, Healthy People*, a ten-year plan for addressing mental health and substance use, embraces this new outlook. A .pdf version of the presentation will be on the Community Action Initiative website: www.communityactioninitiative.ca



Community Action Initiative Co-Chair Barb Keith opening the event.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

Participants described each of their successful granted projects:

Lisa Mowatt from the **Gitksan Health Society** described a youth mentorship program for 11 First Nations communities, led by her agency. It began by bringing people together, in groups ranging from 120-200 participants, in the summer, with activities developed to respond to needs for: youth engagement, self-esteem, support given by elders, and more cultural learning.

Erin Dusdal from the **John Howard Society of North Island** spoke to the Imagine Campbell River campaign, which enhances awareness of, and skills to foster, community resiliency through



workshops involving community ambassadors through a train-the-trainer model.

Mike Kent from the **Kootenay Boundary Services Co-operative** reviewed his five-project collaborative effort, all involving 7-12 year old at-risk boys, to help them transition to a healthy adolescence through engagement and self-esteem building mentorship programs.

Roberta Stewart of the **Nisga'a Valley Health Authority** discussed her agency's project to enhance cultural attachment through the revitalization of the role of Wilp Chiefs and Matriarchs in community mental health, while builds the skills of children and youth to help them cope with anxiety and depression.

Patricia Dabiri of the **Reach Community Health Centre** described her agency's program to promote health and social inclusion among immi-

grant and refugee communities. This is being achieved through the creation of support groups in the first language of participants, led by community members.

Melanie Baerg, from **School District 50**, a partner in the project led by the **Swan Bay – Rediscovery Program**, spoke



about the Canoe Journey project. The project itself is an ongoing effort to promote mental wellness and the avoidance of problematic substance use. Thanks to funds contributed by the CAI grant, it is now offered as a locally-developed credit course for secondary students and has broadened

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News is what people want to know, and not necessarily what you want to tell them. Include interesting facts and figures... and new angles
-Lesli Boldt

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA TRAINING

Participants had a media training session with Lesli Boldt, President of Boldt Communications. Lesli explained what to expect from the upcoming media announcement on January. She also gave broader media tips, highlighting the relevance of communicating well.

Since it is important for social profit organizations to tell their stories effectively, Lesli recommended effective platforms for sharing organizations' stories. She gave some concrete examples of things that work (as well as things that do not). More detail on successful media engagement will be

provided through a separate toolkit Lesli has developed specifically for grant recipients.

The Community Action Initiative wants to hear about grant recipients making the news. To see who's been profiled so far, check out: www.communityactioninitiative.ca/impact/inthenews



Lesli Boldt helping participants learn new skills for media engagement.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION CONTINUED

to include children age 0 to 6 as well as the general community.

Daphne Raymond from the **Sooke Family Resource Society**, a partner in the project led by the **Young Parents Support Network** described their work focused on providing additional supports to young parents to strengthen mental wellness and resiliency. The project provides for capacity building and early intervention services, including weekly support groups, family outreach, child play group and discussion groups.

Mike Gawliuk from the **Canadian Mental Health Association—Kelowna and District Branch** introduced



the project led by his agency, which is helping transitions to adulthood among 16-24 year olds who risk falling through the cracks. The project promotes both individual and community capacity building, helping to connect youth and adult social systems, and helping youth navigate the system and connect with peers and the community.

Lisa DePaoli from the **Cariboo Family Enrichment Centre** spoke of her agency's efforts with its partners to increase youth engagement as a protective factor for mental health. The project is targeted to both First Nations and non-First Nations people. The project is being guided by significant youth input, which has showed them that what the community thinks youth need is different from what youth think.

Kate Langham of the **Dze L K'ant Aboriginal Friendship Centre** talked about her group's efforts to expand a successful drop-in program to include youth age 13-18, particularly those who are at risk and Aboriginal. The program will provide a wrap-around, multi-tiered approach to mental health. It will promote resiliency through mentorship, leadership, and improved communication across agencies serving youth.



Jana Gainor of the **Fireweed Collective Society** explained that the project led by her

agency seeks to create a youth-friendly community and promote access to healthy lifestyle activities, including a food-based harm-reduction strategy to support youth transitions. Through work with partner agencies, efforts will also be made to bridge gaps in services needed by youth.

Jennie Hoffman of the **Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House** discussed her agencies project to give voice, training and support to youth aged 16-24 who face barriers. As it unfolds, the project will benefit 90 youth participants, who will learn to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings through film while also learning important personal development skills and reducing the stigma of mental illness. The project came about in response to needs and suggestions raised by youth.

Samantha Corrington of the **Ladysmith Resources Centre Association** described her agency's efforts to engage youth and address growing substance abuse rates. The project asked young people last summer for potential business ideas. Now in 2012, the youth will make the winning proposal a reality: a local youth-led and youth-run movie theatre in an unused school classroom, accessible to the community at large. The project will boost

To date, the CAI has funded 17 Service Innovation Grant Projects, and enabled 54 Convening Grant projects.



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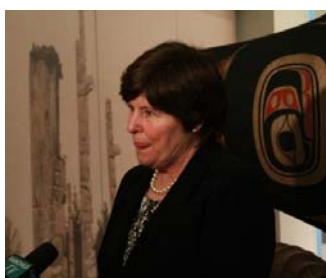
INTERACTIVE SESSION – SERVING OUR CLIENTS

David Diamond, of *Headlines Theatre* provided an interactive theatre-based session, helping participants to better understand the complexities of dealing with clients in the

mental health sector. By focusing on stories experienced by those attending, he invited participation in an exercise called ‘Rainbow of Desires’. This technique uses

stories as a tool for understanding other people’s fears and desires, which allows the public to draw lessons that can be applied in their work with the community.

MINISTER’S ANNOUNCEMENT TUESDAY JANUARY 17TH



On January 17th the Honourable Mary McNeil, Minister of Child and Family Development formally announced the latest recipients of Service Innovation Grants and congratulated agency representatives. Before Minister McNeil’s announcement, Deborah Sparrow, an

Elder from the Musqueam Nation, welcomed us to traditional Coast Salish territory, and underscored the importance of the work being done to address mental health and substance use issues.

In her speech, Minister McNeil encouraged grant recipients in their work. She spoke of the ways in which mental health touches all of us and the importance of partnerships, “it’s all of us together who are going to make the difference.”

Paul Lacerte, CAI Co-Chair, thanked the Minister and also spoke to the importance of relationships and self-esteem building for communities, and the overall public. This served as the foundation for collaboration and building outward relationships—our Day #2 focus.



The Hon. Mary McNeil, BC Minister of Child and Family Development.

Clearly define your work so funders can better understand its value.

–Niveria Oliveira, Vancouver Foundation

CASE STUDY DISCUSSION—PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

This session was facilitated by Pam Chaloult. It aimed to help participants to work through options in more detail for addressing a commonly held problem: how to sustain a good project once the grant money runs out. A single agency volunteered to be a case study for this question — the Kootenay Boundary Regional Services Co-operative (KBRSC).

The session began with Mike



Kent (the KBRSC representative), providing an overview of the efforts his agency has taken to date in relation to this challenge. Three expert panel members were on hand to ask clarifying questions

and provide advice.

The experts consisted of: Niveria Oliveira, Manager of Grants and Community Initiatives at the Vancouver Foundation; Michelle Fortin, Executive Director of the Watari Youth and Family Services Society; and Shelagh Turner, Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association—Kelowna and District Branch.

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CASE STUDY DISCUSSION CONTINUED

The panel members then provided several pieces of advice to Mike, including the following:

- The importance of spending extra time and energy more clearly defining the project (actually five projects rolled into one), so funders can better understand its value. For example, each distinct project could have a tag line, making it easier to link them;



- Placing more emphasis on evaluation (including hard facts) to be able to demonstrate project worth to potential funders (Schools could be a good data source, speaking to the broader project impacts on school attendance, social interactions, and other factors);
- Spending time on communications with potential stakeholders, getting message out to school districts,

government, the community and business; and

- Thinking beyond funding for sustainability, focusing on what is needed to achieve broader goal of strong community mentoring capacities.

Audience members also provided the following advice:

- Also recognizing the value that ceremony and spiritual aspects of the work being done –in impacting people directly involved, and sending powerful messages to the broader community; and
- Underscoring the uniqueness of this project, which seeks to create a healing



Shelagh Turner offering advice in case study discussion.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION, CONTINUED

connections with adults, engagement, and self-confidence.



Geoff Pross of the **Pemberton Youth Services Society** discussed the project being led by partner agency the Mountain Youth Society. It will involve activities-based mentorship and a facilitation program to support to youth in transitions. It links youth

to Elders and to food, from seed to table. For youth in grade 11, activities will focus on training in food growing 'from seed to table'. That grade 11 cohort will later be hired to train a grade 7 cohort of students.

Jeff Schiffer of the **Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Social Services Society**

spoke of his agency's project aimed at Aboriginal youth in foster care and at-risk non-Aboriginal youth, and developed in consultation with Elders. The project will provide access to culturally relevant land-based practices to foster wellness, combined

with self-care and interpersonal skills development. The notion of healthy food as medicine will also be fostered.



Kee Warner of the **Whitecrow FASD Village Society** introduced her project, focused on youth living with FASD or similar difficulties. By enabling these youth to tell

It's great to see the diversity in our country, our province, come together for mental health.

—**Nita Morven**,
Nisga'a Valley Health Authority



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SCALING AND PARTNERSHIPS -DISCUSSION

This session, facilitated by Doug Allan, aimed to discuss ideas for building upon the partnerships already established through granting. Laura Tate gave a brief presentation to help build a shared vocabulary for discus-



sion. She explained that *scaling* applies not just to resources, but to the impact of work done. Scaling involves economies of scale and also seeks to make things more efficient. Partnerships help by allowing groups to expand their services and reach more broadly than would be possible alone.

Scaling can also boost sus-

tainability. Funders today fund collaboration. Instead of doling out “millions of individual drops of water into millions of buckets”, they see that a smaller number of larger buckets can do more.

The audience suggested ideas and comments on their own experiences.

One group confirmed that networking and partnering in their region was enhancing overall success in the granting process. They noted that often groups compete for the same grants. By having good relationships, they began looking at projects that had already received grants to see points of potential collaboration in the work itself. This has allowed agencies to better fulfill their mandates — and promises made via grants.

Several audience members expressed interest in the idea of creating some sort of virtual space or library for sharing toolkits and resources with each other, so more groups could use successful models as starting points, rather than having to reinvent things from scratch. The notion of wikis, as discussion tools for larger groups, was also raised. They allow members to upload information and discuss ideas.

The Knowledge Exchange also allowed neighbouring organizations to connect with each other. One, in a remote location, had begun discussions with a neighbour to consider exchanges between the youth in each program, and learning visits to assess a possible youth drop-in centre.

Many funders are reluctant to dole out “millions of individual drops of water into millions of buckets”.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION, CONTINUED

their stories, and build peer support, the project will enhance resiliency while also linking youth and other community members. It will also raise awareness of the strengths, obstacles, and practical steps which can be taken by and for those with FASD.

Shari Hughson of **?Eniyud Health Services** spoke with colleagues **April William** and **Reaco Billy** about their pro-

ject, aimed at youth between ages 12-17 and 18-30 in the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, Nemiah Valley. Based on discussions with youth, the project will address the misuse of drugs and alcohol; issues of low self-esteem, a lack of sufficient role models, and the impact of challenging environments. It will do this by focusing on the development of: life skills and resources;



psychological wellbeing, community vitality, time use and living standards. The project is youth-led (friends helping friends). It will also integrate First Nations and western cultures.



Reaco Billy and Minister McNeil.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT

This panel session involved three different kinds of partnerships with government.

The first type, addressed by Stephen Smith of the Ministry of Health, and Jonny Morris of the Canadian Mental Health Association—BC Division (CMHA-BC), addressed the *Healthy Minds, Healthy Campuses* project.

Because the Ministry of Health (MOH) focuses more on policy development and stewardship of the health system, rather than direct service provision, the opportunities for partnership are often more strategic. This one occurred because



implementation of a broader plan (*Healthy Minds, Healthy People*), required some connection to post-secondary campuses; and through the work being done by CMHA-BC, the MOH was able to tap into a pre-existing network. This partnership has included the delivery of annual knowledge exchange summits, which have enabled grassroots ideas and best practices for addressing mental health and substance use issues to come forward, and to also help shape policy.

The second type involved BC First Nations, the Province, and the Government of Canada. Michelle DeGroot of the interim First Nations Health Authority, spoke to this unique and far-reaching partnership. She explained that First Nations people suffer disproportionately from health issues; and the plan aimed to find better ways of addressing these. First Nations themselves also needed to unite to find better opportunities for their communities, and to speak with one voice to enhance results.

These efforts have been quite successful, leading to the ratification in May 2011 of a Framework Agreement which provides for the creation of a First Nations Health Authority and the phased transfer to it of federally administered programs and services.

Michelle shared some lessons learned from this process which could help others seeking to partner with government, regardless of scale:

- 1) The importance of honouring culture –your own culture as well as the culture(s) of the other potential partner organizations;
- 2) Honouring those who pave the way –those who have helped and will help the process;
- 3) Maintaining unity and

discipline;

- 4) Creating relationships: be tough on the issues and easy on each other, as strong relationships enable results; and
- 5) Engaging at the appropriate level. (This can take time to figure out).

The third type involved a government service delivery partnership, addressed by Sandy Wiens of the Ministry of Child and Family Development, and Jeannie Rohr of The Families Organized for Recognition and Care Equality for Kids Mental Health (The F.O.R.C.E.)

This particular partnership involved the parent training component of a program for children with anxiety disorders. It included parent workshops for families lead by families, always partnering with a clinician or professional. Since then, Friends for Life (FFL) has expanded to include an online FFL workshop, enabling a reach out to rural areas. Modules were added to go with the workshop. Also added was a forum so families can ask questions on line.

A key aspect of this partnership is built on trust, and a recognition that each party comes to the table with positive intentions. Partnering actually becomes very time-efficient once you get to know people well.



Michelle DeGroot speaking about the Tripartite First Nations Health Plan.

A pre-existing community-sector network can be important in encouraging government partnerships.



Sandy Wiens and Jeannie Rohr discuss The F.O.R.C.E. and its work with MCFD.

CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS

The Knowledge Exchange ended with closing words from CAI Co-Chair Barb Keith, who summarized the learning outcomes over the two-day event. Barb wished attendees safe travels home-ward, and thanked various people for their work in

making the event a success.

The CAI promised to send a summary of the event to attendees, and to distribute a contact list of grant recipients so that everyone can keep in touch with each other in future.

Staff will continue to keep grant recipients apprised of new developments which may be of interest. Grant recipients were also encouraged to continue checking out the CAI's website for updates and new features.

Check out our website for more information:
www.communityactioninitiative.ca

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

An event like this takes a lot of team effort. In addition to the participants, who were fully engaged and made great contributions, other people making a difference included:

- The staff of the Bill Reid Gallery for hosting us in their beautiful venue and their gracious help with set up, take down, and general event support;
- The Musqueam Band, and particularly Deborah Sparrow, for enabling a warm welcome to Coast Salish Traditional Territory;
- Nadia Carvalho, Community Planner, who volunteered with registration and general event support;
- Doctoral students Magdalena Ugarte and Lyana Patrick from the UBC

School of Community and Regional Planning, whose notes helped inform this summary;

- Vivian Lee, Judy Miller, and Nancy Wang of the Canadian Mental Health Association of BC for logistical support;
- David Diamond and Liza Lindgren of Headlines Theatre;
- The various speakers and panellists who gave us much to think about: Stephen Smith, Niveria Oliveira, Michelle Fortin, Shelagh Turner, Mike Kent, Jonny Morris, Michelle DeGroot, Sandy Wiens, and Jeannie Rohr;
- Members of the CAI Leadership Council whose guidance and decisions set the framework for the

event;

- Lesli Boldt, Pam Chalout, and the whole crew of Boldt Communications (duties too numerous to list!);
- The staff of SPARC BC who filmed our entire event and helped with a range of other technical matters;
- Rocky Mountain Equipment for the sound system used at the media announcement;
- Potluck Catering for feeding us;
- Doug Allan for facilitating over both days and for assisting with planning and structure; and
- Laura Tate, Provincial Director, and Jessica Pan, Program Coordinator, for pulling it all together.

space for young men.