



BRITISH COLUMBIA
SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY
- Victoria Branch -

BCSS VICTORIA SPRING 2017 NEWSLETTER

Growth and Recovery

FOR INFO OR SELF REFERRAL: VISIT WWW.BCSSVICTORIA.CA OR CALL 250-384-4225 EMAIL: ADMIN.BCSS@SHAW.CA

IN THIS ISSUE: The Iris Reception, Thank you to a long-time volunteer, Bungy Jump News, Peer Support Updates and more!

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH & THE IRIS RECEPTION

Kate Mansell, BCSS Victoria Board Member and Iris Reception Committee Chair

I worked for many years (almost 19!) at Boys and Girls Clubs and very early in my time with them I was shocked to learn about

Mental illness will indirectly affect all Canadians at some time through a family member, friend or colleague and 20% of Canadians will personally experience a mental illness in their lifetime.

I know this all to well as one of my nephews died by suicide just shortly before he turned 19 and another

children suffering from the effects of mental illness. I heard the stories of some as young as 8 being removed from school because of behavior problems and others suspected or diagnosed with bipolar or other mental disorders. And while there were many happy success stories it certainly wasn't always the case.

close family member was diagnosed with bipolar over 20 years ago. Fortunately, that is now under control although it was very scary for a few years as he was hospitalized 3 times for this. While the outcome for one was tragic, these two youth were pretty compelling reasons to join the BCSS Victoria Board.

And this is why I am very pleased to be chairing the

Iris Reception
presented by Investors Group
May 23rd, 2017
4:00 to 6:00pm
Hotel Grand Pacific
Tickets \$65
Keynote Speaker:
Bernard Richard
BC Representative
for Children & Youth
hibid.ca/events/iris-reception
Investing in the Mental Wealth of Youth
In Support of the
BC Schizophrenia Society - Victoria
BCSS Victoria
250.384.4225

committee organizing the Iris Reception this year – the funds raised at this event will be used to support programs for youth.

Mental health problems in later life very often have their roots in early childhood. The Institute of Health Economics has reported that researchers "have established considerable

evidence regarding the effectiveness of parental and early childhood interventions in reducing problems that children face in school and later in life. There is now evidence that early childhood intervention reduces mental health problems (and associated mental health service use), the use of social services, and criminal behavior (and the use of the justice system)."

It is so important that we invest in evidence-informed strategies for children and youth that can meaningfully reduce the risk of serious mental health problems and illnesses developing in adulthood.

The following is from the Mental Health Commission's Youth Speakers Training Kit:

"Youth who are struggling with their mental health have difficulty succeeding at school which can greatly impact their post-secondary dreams and aspirations. We also know that 70% of adults living with a mental health problem or mental illness state that the first onset of their symptoms began when they were teenagers.

- The fear of stigma often delays diagnosis and treatment. Yet early intervention can make a dramatic difference in quality of life.
- Only one in six children diagnosed with a mental health problem or mental illness will get treatment.
- 40% of parents say they would not admit to anyone, not even their doctor, that they had a

child with a mental health problem or mental illness. On the positive side, adolescents are one of the best targets for anti-stigma campaigns (Corrigan et. al., 2005). It is during this developmental period that foundations are laid for adult attitudes and beliefs which, if positive, could prevent stigmatizing behavior in the future."

BCSS Victoria is a small organization with a very big heart. You can help that heart keep on beating for youth with mental illness and give them hope for a meaningful life. We cannot afford not to support this incredible organization! And it can start with buying a ticket or providing an auction item...

Iris Reception

Investing in the Mental Wealth of Youth



Cam Webster, a young man with lived experience, will share his story and how BCSS Victoria helped him in his recovery.

**May 23rd, 2017
4:00 to 6:00pm
Hotel Grand Pacific**



**BRITISH COLUMBIA
SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY
- VICTORIA BRANCH -**

**THE IRIS RECEPTION:
FEATURING JACK KNOX
AS EMCEE**

PLEASE VISIT
WWW.HIBID.CA/EVENTS/IRIS-RECEPTION TO BUY
A TICKET OR CONTACT
KATE AT
KATEMANSELL@SHAW.CA
OR PAULA & REBECCA
AT ADMIN.BCSS@SHAW.CA
TO FIND OUT HOW YOU
CAN DONATE AN
AUCTION ITEM OR
MAKE A SMALL GIFT.

Farewell to our volunteer Joan Bell

Joan Bell has been a vital and active volunteer with BCSS Victoria since October 2005. She worked in the resource library as an office volunteer and she also volunteered over the years for many BCSS Victoria special events. Joan always made time for callers or for anyone who dropped in at the office. She always greeted staff members and service users with a warm smile and a caring manner. Joan also brought a vibrant energy and a great sense of humor to the office.



MANY THANKS TO YOU JOAN FOR YOUR 12 YEARS OF SERVICE, COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION TO BCSS VICTORIA. YOU WILL MOST CERTAINLY BE MISSED BY ALL OF US! WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST!

Please Join Us in Welcoming our new Family Counsellor: John Libson

John Libson brings a wealth of experience to the BCSS Victoria Family Counsellor position. He has been working in counselling for over fourteen years. He earned his Master's degree in Clinical Counselling Psychology from LaSalle University. Most recently he has worked with Vancouver Coastal Health, CMHA-Vancouver/Burnaby Branch, and the University of Victoria. John has worked with youth, families and adults individually and in groups. John has recently completed level 1 training in on-line counselling through Therapy Online and has specialist training in areas such as CBT, Motivational Interviewing and Early Psychosis Intervention.



JOHN IS AVAILABLE FOR FAMILY COUNSELLING, AND IS FACILITATING BCSS VICTORIA FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS.

Contact him: familycounsellor.bcsc@shaw.ca
or 250-384-4225

UPCOMING AT BCSS VICTORIA:

- **WRAP FOR YOUTH!**
REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR JUNE.
- **STAY TUNED FOR AN INFO-SESSION ON A STAND UP FOR MENTAL HEALTH COMEDY CLASS!**
- **UPCOMING INFORMATIVE PUBLIC FORUM: DETAILS WILL BE POSTED ON THE WEBSITE, FACEBOOK AND SENT OUT VIA EMAIL SOON.**

Recovery Orientation

When we speak about recovery, what does it mean? And to whom does it apply? I have had the honour of being a visitor on many paths of people living with mental illness and their families. Recovery can be seen to be an outcome, such as symptom abatement. Recovery can also be, and this is how we use the term at BCSS Victoria, a process. It is seen more as a lifestyle and outlook. How does one explore movement forward in life and have a chance to explore what life may hold? One thing to keep in mind is that people can have a mental illness and still have "positive mental health"; people without mental illness can have "poor mental health". There are many factors that contribute to positive or poor mental health. We will be exploring recovery more fully in our next newsletter. In the meantime, please see the following guidelines that were developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada:

http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/MHCC_RecoveryGuidelines_ENG_0.pdf

Together, in our communities we can make a positive difference. How are you making a difference today? How are you looking after your mental health today?

Thank you for being part of our community of social transformation.

-Hazel Meredith, BCSS Victoria Executive Director



FINDING PHOENIX

A Poem By Patrick Hamilton

*Moving toward ones goal piercing the veil
approaching oneself darkened shade
mirrored then receding away
Embracing ones true self holding tight
to the vision reflected as awakening from sleep
sights, sounds, colours and the light of day
Surrounded by the fulfillment of loved ones embraces
the joyous spirit within arising
Just like a phoenix from the ashes of ones former self
Casting away the darkened shade
as when rising from slumber
Into the miracle and wonderment
of the world filled with loved ones*

Write a letter!

By Terry Germanson

A recent encounter at Island Health has left you frustrated, angry, and not heard? The reception you or your loved one got from MHSU was less than ideal? You see a way the EMP staff could have handled things differently? Then consider writing a letter to the Patient Care Quality Office (PCQO)! Check out their website <http://www.viha.ca/patientcarequalityoffice>.

First off, to be fair, contact the staff member or manager of the service with whom you have the grievance. Admittedly, a certain amount of courage must be summoned to do this. But remember, you have rights and your opinion matters. They are there to serve you. And you may be surprised to hear the manager encouraging you to write the letter and thanking you for the call! They may also have solutions to offer right away that never occurred to you. If you do not know whom you should contact, call the PCQO at 250-370-8323 and ask their advice.

Make sure your letter contains enough specifics to give context to what went awry for you. At a minimum your letter should provide the following information:

Your full name. The name and birth date for the patient who received care.

The location/facility where care was provided.

The date(s) that the care was provided.

Contact information for the complainant and/or the patient.

Address your letter to:

Patient Care Quality Office

Royal Jubilee Hospital Memorial Pavilion,

Watson Wing, Rm 315

1952 Bay Street, Victoria, BC V8R 1J8

As you are writing, for it is hard work, keep in mind that criticism delivered in a constructive manner is a gift. You are doing those in the system a favor if you point out something they did not see. You are doing others in your position a favor too. And, who knows?, your letter might even lead to a positive incremental change in the way things are done and others who follow you will benefit. Content aside, the more letters the PCQO receives about mental health care delivery, the more MHSU knows they have an active and aware clientele and that alone can up their game.

The act of writing this letter has personal benefits too. Not receiving the mental health help you felt you or your loved one deserved has left you feeling misunderstood and disrespected. At least that is the natural reaction most would have. Just the act of writing the letter, articulating your position, and taking a stand is empowering! It feels good and you are taking care of yourself. Share your letter draft with a close friend or two and get feedback. This has a way of further validating your experience and your reaction. Edit the letter if you so choose after you have thought about things a bit more. You are in charge.

Finally send the letter. You can expect a call in a few days from the PCQO acknowledging that they received it. They are likely to ask you if you have any other related concerns and if there is anyone in particular within MHSU who should receive a copy. They take these letters seriously and that is a good thing. The head of MHSU will receive a copy.

You will then get a call back from a senior person with responsibilities over the service which was unsatisfactory to you. This call can take up to 40 business days, but most often it is much sooner than that. This writer got a callback in 4 days. Be prepared to problem solve with this coordinator to arrive at a solution. Be prepared to hear their side of the problem too and the challenges they face. It is a two-way street. You are no longer dealing with an impersonal institution anymore, but a real person. Good luck!

As a final note, also consider sending a letter to the manager and PCQO if you received care which was creative, amazing, and beyond the call of duty. They need to hear this too!

THIS YEAR'S NAKED BUNGY JUMP FOR BCSS WAS A GREAT SUCCESS! OVER 150 PEOPLE BRAVED THE FIERCE WEATHER TO SUPPORT BCSS VICTORIA. WITH GREAT SPIRITS, AND THE HELP OF A TOASTY FIRE AND OF COURSE HOT DOGS, SMORES AND COFFEE – WE COULDN'T HAVE HAD A BETTER TIME! WE RAISED OVER \$34,000.00 WHICH WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS BEING ABLE TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND SERVICES TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND FAMILY MEMBERS. MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS MAKING THIS EVENT A SUCCESSFUL ONE ESPECIALLY TO ALL THE FOLKS AT WILD PLAY ELEMENT PARKS

11th Annual Naked Bungy Jump for BCSS!

The Rewards of Taking the Plunge: Reflections on Bungy 2017

by Andrea Bennington

Over the last 11 years people along with BCSS Victoria staff have come together every year in Nanaimo, BC to take a plunge from a bridge Naked or nearly naked with nothing more than a glorified elastic band around their ankles. Over the last 2 years I have had the opportunity to be part of this event.

Two years ago if you asked me if I would ever Bungy jump Naked I probably would have said Oh, that's an odd request. I wasn't too bad with the Bungy jumping idea it was the nudity that scared me more than a 150 ft. drop.

I had no idea what nudity had to do with a Mental Health fundraiser? Wait a minute, I thought, if we want people to take us seriously we can't possibly play into this "crazy people do crazy things" stigma, can we? I did not make the connection initially with Nakedness symbolizing freedom from all accoutrements and also, in equal measures, the opportunity to present both vulnerability and strength in the face of great odds and environmental factors not always in our control. What better way to start a discussion on mental health than to present a picture of freeing ourselves from stigma and shame while presenting a simultaneously

visceral image of both vulnerability and strength.

So, two years ago this past February I jumped Naked for BCSS to raise funds for Mental Health programming in Victoria. It wasn't simply a shocking act to get people thinking about mental health, although it seemed to do that, it was instead about people coming together to fight against the social isolation that so often comes with a diagnosis of mental illness. It provided a chance for people to gather and celebrate overcoming great odds, embracing resiliency and moving forward in hope.

By raising money for recovery based programming BCSS Victoria provides people with tools to manage their conditions and go on to lead healthy and fulfilling lives on their own terms.

When we open up conversations about mental health we can educate those around us about the realities of mental illness and fight against harmful stigmas that prevent people from seeking out and getting the care that they need to get and stay well long term.

The money raised allows BCSS Victoria to offer recovery-based programs to the public free of charge, which is so crucial in ensuring that no one will be left behind or to fall through the cracks regarding care due to financial constraints. Everyone should get access to the care they need.

There are scarier things than pitching yourself head-first attached to an elastic band. There is little more liberating than facing your fears head on and free of shame. So, do you need to do something outlandish to raise the awareness and acceptance surrounding mental health? Maybe, maybe not, the choice is up to you. So, what are you up to next February? I know where I'll be...

This past year I jumped again because I believe in building communities of recovery and hope. This is something BCSS Victoria stands wholeheartedly behind.

2017 Naked
Bungy Jump for
BCSS!



Special Thanks to all the volunteers and sponsors that make this event possible!

Camera Crew: Kara Udell, Lindsay Mitchell, Bryce Knutson, Shawn Eddie

Event Volunteers: David Axon, Corey Maruca, Michaela Iacob, Andrea Bennington, Jessie Binning, Heidi Bermudez, Lisa Ellis, Anoop Sohi, Dana Lewis, Olivia Lindokken, Esther Lindokken, Claire Lindokken, Bruce Saunders, Mark, Toni Cologero and Louise Sowerby.



A few words from our most recent students...

"The BCSS Victoria location has been instrumental in helping to bridge the gap of access to services and resources available in the community, as clients and their families navigate their journey with recovery. Completing a clinical placement at the facility provided a unique opportunity to better understand how to assist clients and their family receive the support needed. Many individuals shared the challenges they faced after being discharged from the hospital and felt at a loss in terms of where to turn regarding supports and services. BCSS Victoria was where they turned and were provided with the support necessary to overcome many of these barriers. The facility offers an abundance of programs, groups, counselling and information for clients and their families regarding mental health concerns. Completing our psychosocial rehabilitation practicum at BCSS Victoria has offered a wonderful opportunity to apply our theoretical learning to practice. Not only did we find that the site promotes an empowering, strength based recovery approach, but the atmosphere is one of kindness, respect and inclusion. We feel honored to have been welcomed into such a warm and supportive family."

Peter and Michelle – BCSS Victoria RPN Practicum Students Spring 2017

BCSS Victoria is honored to host practicum students from an array of educational programs and facilities.



News from the Peer Support Coordinator

by Don Palmer, MSW, RSW

In October of 2013 our peer support team was greatly enriched by the addition of three Peer Supporters: Louise Sowerby, Kent Laforme, and Wes Stolth. Louise had already been a much appreciated presence at BCSS Victoria for over 5 years as one of the two facilitators of the Hope and Recovery support group. She continued that role as she took on the added responsibility of becoming a Peer Supporter. In the last farewell to one after another as they move on to the next point, our sadness over their abated by knowing it is timely concentrate their efforts and ways that better meet greater them ever closer to

As time went on Louise, Kent and Wes each uniquely contributed to their peer's recovery in ways that not only enlightened their journey but inspired their fellow peer supporters to refine their much valued efforts ever further.	few months we have had to say of these singular symbols of hope chapters of their lives. At this departure can only be slightly and just for each of them to share their sterling qualities in challenges ahead that will bring succeeding in ways not available
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We are most fortunate that we had John Lamont join the peer support team last Fall and in the last month, Paula Roumeliotis. Both John and Paula have been serving the mission statement of BCSS Victoria for nearly three years with abiding diligence, enthusiasm, and distinction. John has been one of the most requested speakers as a member of our partnership presentation team. Paula has served as our Administrator Coordinator and has spoken many times as a partnership presenter as well as a representative of BCSS Victoria and as an advocate for the rights of all people with a mental health condition. Because of this overlap in departures and arrivals the transition for the peer support team has been far smoother than would have been otherwise possible. For that we are very grateful.

So we say a hearty welcome to John and Paula while wishing Louise, Kent and Wes every good thing they richly deserve as they move onward.



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
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