



M A Y 2 0 1 4

Newsletter

BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch

"Awareness"

For info or self referral: visit www.bcssvictoria.ca or call 250-384-4225 email: admin.bcss@shaw.ca

BCSS Victoria Iris Luncheon May 23rd, 2014

Guest Speaker: Corey Maruca. Tickets: \$30 for speaker and buffet lunch. Please bring your cheque books for the Silent Auction. Funds raised stay local! The Iris Luncheon will be held on May 23rd from noon to 1:30pm in support of the BC Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch at the Union Club of BC, 805 Gordon Street, Victoria. Local champions for mental health can join us for this meaningful event to raise funds through sponsorship, donation of silent auction items, and attendance at the Iris Luncheon Fundraiser. Help us make a difference in our Capital Region for those facing serious mental illness. Major sponsors, Investors Group, partner with the BC Schizophrenia Society Victoria Branch to raise awareness and funds during the 3rd Annual Iris Luncheon. "We are so very pleased to partner with community leaders to show support for those facing the stigma and other challenges of schizophrenia and psychosis. Recovery is possible for those with schizophrenia and psychosis" stated Hazel Meredith, BCSS Victoria, Executive Director.



PEER GUIDELINES

The British Columbia Schizophrenia Society (BCSS) Victoria is a peer / family based community organization. What makes the BCSS Victoria so unique is the component of being a recovery oriented organization. Peer work has a very unique definition which is tied into the BCSS Victoria. A "peer" is an individual who has a serious mental illness, and utilizes this lived experience to help others . . . This battle to achieve recovery may seem futile to outsiders looking in on the situation, but in actual fact, leads to an endurance - and this endurance can be taught and shared with other people who suffer from serious mental illness themselves . . .

. . . Currently there are new "Peer Support Guidelines" that the Mental Health Commission of Canada recently developed. Don Palmer and Wendy Mishkin from our organization helped in their creation. These guidelines will be the new standard for peer support work. To learn more, download the PDF document at: http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/system/files/private/document/Peer_Support_Guidelines.pdf. The Peer Support Guidelines are less of a personal commentary and more about integrating this new structure for peer work. When an individual with serious mental illness feels that they are stable from the challenges from their own symptoms, what often happens is that a seed is planted to want to help other people – others who are just starting out on their own journey of serious mental illness. It is the invaluable experience gained through one's own unique journey with serious mental illness which is the force that seems to inspire another who is just starting on their own personal recovery process. This is the core of the peer model . . . (continued on page 6).

Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day

Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day is scheduled for May 24th. The British Columbia Schizophrenia Society also has an Iris Luncheon scheduled for May 23rd, please visit our website to learn more information at <http://bcssvictoria.ca/events/2nd-annual-iris-luncheon-fundraiser-at-the-union-club> Victoria City Hall and the Legislative Building will be displaying purple lights to support this awareness building day.



Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day is about talking openly about symptoms of psychosis. It is also about sharing lived experiences of mental illness with our communities in a friendly and non-threatening way. Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day has many layers to it, and it is important for many people in so many different ways. I think that one of the reasons why May 24th is so important is because it informs the community of this very complicated medical condition.

So many people in the community seem to be able to stigmatize serious mental illness, but how many people actually know anything about serious mental illness, and where are their judgments coming from in the first place? The Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day is a chance for individuals inflicted with serious mental illness to safely communicate their personal experiences with the community. The intention of this communication is to bring awareness, to inform and to educate the community. This is one of the only days in the year where the stigma of serious mental illness is tackled head-on throughout Canada. That is the intention anyway!

To narrow in on my own personal experience, and to give an example of how complicated schizophrenia is, I was in my late thirties when I enrolled in a program pertaining to serious mental illness. I was affiliated with the British Columbia Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch, because of the college program I was enrolled in when I continually heard the notion that people with serious mental illness often do not have insight into their own illness. I had heard something along these lines on multiple occasions, but on one day, during the Iris Luncheon (which represents Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day), the penny dropped for me and the fact that I may indeed have schizophrenia; this was something which I had absolutely no insight about, even though I was studying psychosis. It took another one and a half years of studying schizophrenia and working with individuals with schizophrenia before I uncovered my own slipping in and out of psychosis. It took years of personal work to uncover patterns and schemas indicating the high probability of my own fluctuating internal states. Instead of seeing this development as a detriment, I experienced it as a very positive development because I believe it contributed to my self-awareness and my desire to help others suffering from psychosis.

There are a lot of individuals with schizophrenia who have their own unique and personal narratives about recovery and overcoming all the odds against them and to me they are the heroes of our society. The Schizophrenia and Psychosis Awareness Day is a chance to celebrate these victories: independently, within our own family units, amongst peer members, family members and within the community of Victoria on Vancouver Island. To conclude, I would like to emphasize the positive power of recognizing my own vulnerability due to my own personal psychosis and this profound experience occurred in a way that magnified my personal strengths versus my personal weaknesses.

By - Annuska



BCSS Annual Picnic in the Park

The BCSS Victoria hosts this annual Picnic for community building each year. "We welcome all of our community including families and people with lived experience including WRAP grads". The location will be Windsor Park in Oak Bay on Sat July 5th, 2014 from Noon-3:30pm. If you would like to volunteer on the organizing committee or on the day of the event, donate a food item (non-perishable) or a bingo prize please contact admin.bcss@shaw.ca or call the office at 250-384-4225.

We are also hoping to find a Sponsor, so if you have a contact that would like to support the Picnic please let us know.

It is a fun event with pizza, bingo, and entertainment.

Come and enjoy yourself, please RSVP.

Bring your own chair or blanket to sit on and a bright smile.

Awareness of the Language We Utilize

The British Columbia Schizophrenia Society in Victoria is a progressive organization and is a peer/family member driven organization. One of the programs it offers is a group called the Hope and Recovery Peer Support Group, which happens every Wednesday from 2:00 - 3:30 pm. The group is a place where individuals who have suffered from mental health conditions go to share their lived experience with one another in a safe and comfortable group setting. I have been going to this peer support community-based group since 2012.

When I first attended the group, I was unaware of what was going on. There were so many angles and dimensions to serious mental illness, that it was hard to take it all in. It took me close to one year of going on a regular basis to understand the complex jargon used with the Hope and Recovery Peer Support Group. This complex jargon is necessary, as I now understand, because the language of psychosis (for example) is one that is both private and public. What I mean by that is, experiencing psychosis is such a private experience, that it is no wonder it takes a long time to be able to talk about it; secondly, the language of psychosis is complicated, because it targets the most private symptoms of a person with schizophrenia. This component of private symptoms carries such a weight of responsibility and at the same time it carries a weight of judgment. It is probably the self-judgment (I am speaking from my own personal experience) that makes the words and language of psychosis so hard to articulate publicly. Self-stigma is the same as self-hate, and self-hate is a component to my own personal symptomology. Self-hate and self-stigma can be dismantled by using correct medical words. I can attest to the power of being able to communicate complicated systems of psychosis to others. It is a very empowering situation, when processes of symptoms get articulated for the first time. This articulation has had a profound effect on my well-being because it opened doors to my psyche that were once vaulted shut, sometimes even for decades long.

The Hope and Recovery Peer Support Group focuses on the peer experience, shared lived experience and recovery. I have experienced the power of explaining my dissociations, paranoia and hallucinations to the group. This experience is priceless. I was a suffering person with active psychosis and now I feel I have been reborn, like a snake who has shed her skin for the first time. My psychosis symptoms have become contained in a language that explains powerful trains of thoughts and this process has empowered my well-being - and if I can transform, so can many others. I would recommend trying the Hope and Recovery Peer Support Group on Wednesday afternoons, and if you come in with an open-mind, you may be amazed at your own positive transformation. By - Annuska

"GP for Me" Initiative... BCSS Victoria ...Keeping you in the Loop!- Hazel Meredith

Did you know there is a new initiative in BC called "GP for Me"? It has been a challenge for people with complex needs to find a GP and this initiative including GP funding should help. The GPSC's A GP for Me initiative, recognizes the importance of continuous doctor-patient relationships and is aimed at improving primary care in BC. Announced in February, 2013. A GP for Me strives to: Confirm and strengthen the relationship between family physicians and patients, Better support the needs of vulnerable patients, Increase capacity within the system, Enable patients who want a family doctor to find one. See more information here and feel free to ask your own GP or Walk-In Doctor about this new initiative.

<http://www.gpsc.bc.ca/attachment-initiative/#information>

Research? We're asking you!

A Workshop to Develop
Research Questions with Island Health



- ✓ Do you have **direct experience** with schizophrenia and early psychosis?
- ✓ Do you have **questions** about early psychosis and care that health professionals and Google haven't been able to answer?
- ✓ Do you feel there's a knowledge gap related to early psychosis intervention or care?

If you said YES, you're invited to join Island Health's Research Department for a workshop focused on developing questions you'd like to have answered!

You'll have the opportunity to **DEVELOP** potential research questions important to people living with early psychosis by:

- ❖ **LEARNING** more about the research process, including how to identify gaps and develop research questions
- ❖ **IDENTIFYING** common themes and knowledge gaps related to early psychosis

We will:

- ❖ **PROVIDE** background information
- ❖ **OFFER** a welcoming, respectful atmosphere for participation
- ❖ **FACILITATE** discussion
- ❖ **CLOSE THE LOOP** after the workshop by forwarding your questions to local health researchers and reporting back to you

WHEN: Thursday, May 29, 2014, 2:00-4:00 pm

WHERE: The Woodward Room, Begbie Hall, Royal Jubilee Hospital
2101 Richmond Road, Victoria, V8R 4R7

Parking: We will reimburse parking costs at Royal Jubilee for up to three hours. Parking maps are available online [here](#).

RSVP: For questions, more information or to RSVP, please email **Annie Moore** at isabel.moore@viha.ca or call her at 250-519-7700 ext. 13197.

Please note: given the workshop format of this event, space is limited to six participants per group.

***Come & join the conversation—research is better
when we work together!***

We would like to thank Rob Fleming for sharing the following with members of the House. We would also like to thank Rob Fleming for being such a positive voice for our community.

B.C. SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY AND MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

R. Fleming: I'd like to recognize a vital non-profit society in my community that works on behalf of people with mental illness and their families. The office of the B.C. Schizophrenia Society's Victoria branch is located in my constituency of Victoria–Swan Lake.

This organization serves the mental health community of our region. BCSS Victoria provides services for people with mental illness, regardless of their diagnosis, and supports the people who care about them. The BCSS is a place of compassionate professionalism, providing help to those who live with anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or major depression. They help parents, family and those with a loved one living with these conditions.

This month marks the 30th anniversary of the Victoria branch of the B.C. Schizophrenia Society. It was founded in 1984 by a group of people who wanted to improve local services and support for people with schizophrenia and their families. Currently BCSS Victoria is the largest branch of the B.C. Schizophrenia Society in our province.

This 30th anniversary for BCSS Victoria also falls at the same time that we recognize May 5 to 12 as national Mental Health Week. It's a very important event, encouraging people from all walks of life to learn, talk, reflect and engage with others on all issues relating to mental health. Mental Health Week was developed because mental health and mental illness is a difficult and sometimes uncomfortable topic for many. But it is a subject that becomes infinitely easier to discuss and to lessen prevalent stigmas with dialogue that raises awareness and understanding.

That is part of what BCSS has worked on for 30 dedicated years in my community. I would invite all members of this House to join me in thanking the executive director, Hazel Meredith, and her great staff and volunteers at the B.C. Schizophrenia Society Victoria for the difficult but tremendously appreciated work they contribute to the community and to recognize this milestone anniversary for the organization.

PEER GUIDELINES . . . (continued from page 1) Peer guidelines include the ability to articulate symptoms of illness, situations linking to symptoms, and the ability to think outside the box and rediscover oneself like never before. Peer work involves a certain level of creativity and innovation, and it is something different than what a medical doctor or a psychiatrist can give a patient. It is, like the whole peer model, something specifically linked to the personality of the individual in question seeking help. The guidelines that peer workers apply are different than for other medical jobs in the sense that each situation gets looked at based on the needs of the client. The needs of the new client are often so diverse that they are evaluated on a personal basis versus a one-size fits all basis.

All peer support workers have experienced serious mental illness and have something special about them that qualify them as being exceptional. There are certain criteria that have to be met to become a peer support worker, including having the personality to be able to help another vulnerable individual and experiencing recovery themselves. It is within a group setting that debriefing occurs, and this strengthens the peer model and contains all of the unique components - sewing them all together to create a powerful whole. This is the power of the peer model.

By - Annuska

BCSS Victoria on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/BCSchizophreniaSocietyVictoria>
BC Schizophrenia Society Victoria Branch on Twitter: [@BCSSVictoria](https://twitter.com/BCSSVictoria)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME! Please make cheques payable to:

British Columbia Schizophrenia Society, Victoria Branch (BCSS Victoria)

941 King's Road, Victoria, BC, V8T 1W7 Phone: 384-4225; fax: 388-4391

Easy Giving on our website through Canada Helps Button: www.bcssvictoria.ca E-mail: admin.bcss@shaw.ca

Please accept my tax-deductible donation of: \$_____ (receipts issued for gifts of \$20 and over)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ Province _____

Postal Code _____ Email _____

- ☐ I wish to become a member of BCSS Victoria. (\$25 individual membership)
- ☐ I want BCSS Victoria online newsletter (be informed, save a tree, help us save \$! Share with you network!)
- ☐ E-mail me information about local events and news pertinent to our community! (unsubscribe anytime)

As a local regional branch we provide up to date local info and newsworthy items of provincial, national and international scope.

subscribe to provincial info: <http://www.bcss.org/2007/05/aboutbcss/e-newsletters/>

subscribe to national information: <http://www.schizophrenia.ca/newsletters.php>

Designation (undesignated donations will be put towards supporting BCSS Victoria Programs and Services):

- ☐ Programs & Services (includes children/youth/adult peer programs, advocacy, consultation and more)
- ☐ Memorial Fund (supports education, arts and other goal support)
- ☐ Endowment Fund

Thank you for your contribution!!

Please consider giving throughout the year with payroll deductions programs (i.e. BC government employee payroll deduction program), charitable Christmas or gift giving in another's name or consider a legacy gift to help others who need us. *Thank you!*

“We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia.”

