



Mental Health and Addictions Symposium

# PROGRAM

November 13-14, 2024



# Resources

## ONSITE STAFF



**Sandra Moore** NCLGA



**Bettina Johnson** NCLGA



**Heidi Martel** EVENT PLANNER

## EVENT INFO



### Event Registration Desk Hours

8:00 AM to end of day, November 13–14, 2024



### Location Name

Prince George Civic Centre  
808 Canada Games Way, Prince George, BC

## CONTACT

To connect with onsite staff during the Symposium, please contact [admin@nclga.ca](mailto:admin@nclga.ca) or at the Registration Table.

## SYMPOSIUM CODE OF CONDUCT

### 1. Respectful Behavior

- Treat all participants—attendees, speakers, organizers, and staff—with respect and courtesy.
- Harassment, discrimination, or inappropriate conduct based on gender, sexual orientation, ability, physical appearance, race, religion, or political affiliation will not be tolerated.

### 2. Harassment-Free Environment

- Harassment includes offensive comments, unwanted attention, stalking, inappropriate physical contact, or unwelcome advances.
- If you feel harassed or witness any inappropriate behavior, report it to the Symposium organizers immediately.

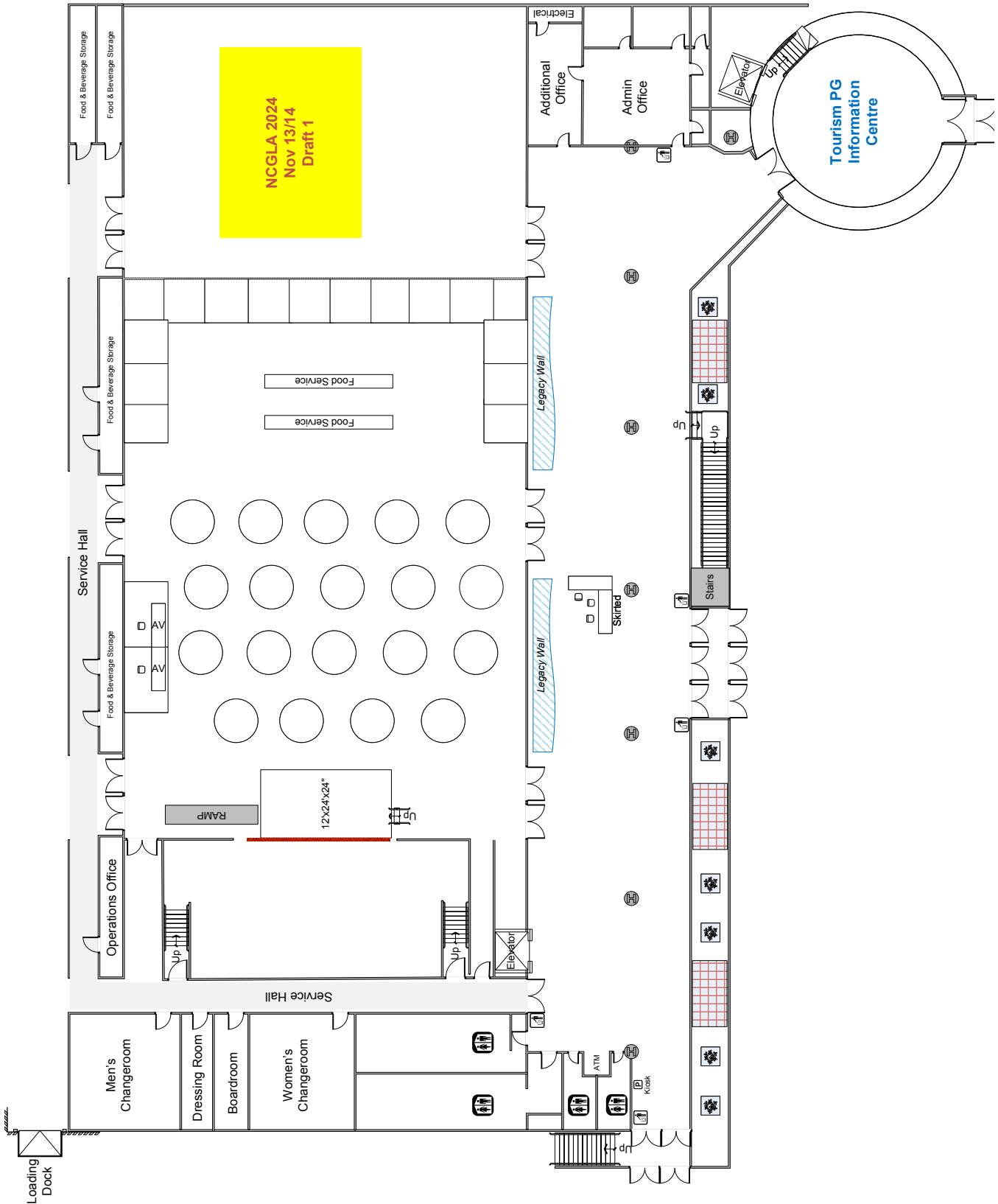
### 3. Professional Conduct

- Refrain from any demeaning, discriminatory, or offensive comments, either in person, online, or in writing.
- Respect the intellectual property and contributions of others, whether it is during presentations or discussions.

### 4. Inclusivity and Diversity

- Be mindful and considerate of all attendees, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for people of all backgrounds and identities.
- Respect different viewpoints during discussions and debates.

# Event Map



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# Welcome to the 2024 Mental Health and Addictions Symposium

**Welcome, delegates and participants, to the inaugural Mental Health and Addictions Symposium, hosted on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation.**

Co-hosted by the North Central Local Government Association, the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, the City of Prince George, and the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, the 2024 Mental Health and Addictions Symposium was conceived through a collaborative process. It aims to provide an informed, connected, and supportive environment for mental health and addiction dialogue and initiatives.

Thank you for being here to contribute your valued insights, experience, and expertise. We recognize the urgent need to address the mental health and addictions crisis impacting our families and communities. By gathering today, we honour a shared commitment to learning from one another and amplifying our collective voice to achieve more effective advocacy and meaningful improvements.

We are all here as representatives from multiple agencies, governments, and community organizations, united in the belief that working together is vital. The challenges we face are complex and multifaceted, but through mutual learning and collaboration, we have the opportunity to craft lasting, impactful solutions. Every perspective matters, and we encourage the exchange of ideas, stories, and strategies that can guide our advocacy and shape innovative policies for better health outcomes.

Through information-sharing and knowledge exchange, we can empower each other, strengthen partnerships, and drive forward coordinated efforts. As we learn from each other, we enhance our capacity to advocate for comprehensive and accessible mental health and addiction services across Central and Northern BC.

Please be sure to visit the tradeshow booths to learn more about local organizations that are actively working to provide vital mental health services and resources. We hope you find inspiration in the engaging plenary addresses and concurrent panel sessions, each featuring speakers with valuable insights and perspectives.

Thank you for your valued participation. We hope this Symposium signifies a crucial step forward in addressing the complex challenges our communities face and paves the way for meaningful change, stronger advocacy and improved mental health outcomes for everyone in our region. Together let us learn, share, and grow to foster a healthier and more resilient future.

Warm regards,

**Chief Dolleen Logan**

Lheidli T'enneh First Nation

**Chair Lara Beckett**

Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

**Mayor Simon Yu**

City of Prince George

**President Judy Greenaway**

North Central Local Government Association



# Agenda

## Wednesday, November 13, 2024

TIME	EVENT
8:00 AM	<b>Registration Opens and Trade Show (open all day)</b> Morning Refreshments and Baked Goods available.
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	<b>1. OPENING CEREMONIES</b> <b>MODERATED BY</b> North Central Local Government Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Traditional Opening</li><li>• O' Canada</li><li>• Welcome Addresses by Co-Hosts</li></ul>
9:45 AM – 10:00 AM	<b>2. SYMPOSIUM AND ACCORD OVERVIEW</b> <b>MODERATED BY</b> North Central Local Government Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building Collaboration and Impact</li></ul>
10:00 AM – 10:15 AM	<b>Refreshment Break</b>
10:15 AM – 11:15 AM	<b>3. PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION</b> <b>MODERATED BY</b> City of Prince George <b>PRESENTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Andrea Derban and Janine Stevenson, Community Action Initiative</li><li>• Melissa Bloodoff, Intersect Youth and Family Services</li></ul>
11:15 AM – 12:15 PM	<b>4. PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – BREAKING DOWN SILOS; COLLABORATION ACROSS THE REGION</b> <b>MODERATED BY</b> TBD <b>PRESENTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Laura Honey and Julia Hintermeister, Saplings Mental Health</li><li>• Chris Kinch, Connective Support Society</li></ul>
12:15 PM – 1:15 PM	<b>Lunch and Keynote Speaker</b> Corey Hirsch, former NHL goaltender, coach, and Olympic Games silver medalist
1:15 PM – 2:15 PM	<b>5. PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – RESOURCES: MENTAL HEALTH</b> <b>GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IS AN EVERYONE ISSUE: THE CURRENT CRISIS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND POWERFUL SOLUTIONS FOR WELLNESS</b> <b>MODERATED BY</b> Regional District of Fraser-Fort George <b>PRESENTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mike Skrypnek, Stigma-Free Mental Health Society</li><li>• Graham Hall, Mental Health and Substance Use, Northern Health</li></ul>

TIME

EVENT

2:20 PM – 3:20 PM

**6. CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

**Concurrent Panel Session 6A: Theme: Mental Health Awareness for Children and Youth**

**CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE**

The child and youth mental health and substance use concurrent session presentation is an opportunity for individuals to gain an understanding of the reality of what children, adolescents, and their families are navigating within the mental health and substance use realm. As mental health clinicians situated within a rural northern community this presentation will include firsthand observations, experiences, and statistics that highlight the unique challenges and successes of northern communities. Risk factors specific to demographic will be examined along with signs and symptoms of mental, emotional distress. Focus on early intervention, response approaches, and support strategies will be explored.

**MODERATED BY** TBD

**PRESENTERS:**

- Laura Honey and Julia Hintermeister, Saplings Mental Health

**Concurrent Panel Session 6B: Theme: Rural Community Services (in-person and )**

**A RURAL AND REMOTE APPROACH FOR INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: FOUNDRY'S JOURNEY OF UNLEARNING AND RE-DEFINING INTEGRATION**

Foundry offers free and confidential supports for young people ages 12 to 24 – mental healthcare, substance use services, physical & sexual healthcare, youth, and family peer supports, and social services – both online and in-person in communities across BC. The rural and remote community development team at Foundry is implementing several pilot projects to learn from the community experts to collaboratively develop a framework that will meet the unique needs of remote communities in BC. This presentation highlights the innovative, community led projects and lessons learned thus far.

**MODERATED BY** City of Prince George

**PRESENTERS:**

- Acasia Preston, Raelene Hodgson, and Colleen Purcka, Intake Coordinator, Foundry BC

**Concurrent Panel Session 6C: Theme: Addictions and Trades**

**IMPORTANT S\*\*T YOU NEED TO KNOW**

This session outlines a practical approach to allow workers to speak up and seek support without the stigma attached to talking about mental health and addiction issues.

The BC Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA) offers a comprehensive mental health resource called RE-MIND aiming to improve construction workers' access to mental health information and services, covering topics such as recognizing mental health challenges, alcohol and drug use, unique challenges for women in construction, taking action for self-help, assisting colleagues, and guidance for employers on responding to their team's mental health needs. The RE-MIND project includes an informative website and "The Lone Hunter" video resources, emphasizing that every mind deserves time to "RE-MIND" and that the workplace is an ideal starting point for addressing mental health concerns.

In partnership with Telus and Alberta Government a program has been developed aimed at creating a workplace that understands and supports workers' needs that not only benefits the employee, but also benefits their families, communities, and results in a more loyal, productive and safe workforce.

**MODERATED BY** North Central Local Government Association

**PRESENTERS:**

- Ian Robb, Chair, Building Trades of Alberta
- Art Reynolds, British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance

**Concurrent Panel Session 6D: Theme: Culturally Relevant and Safe Services**

**MODERATED BY** Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

**PRESENTERS:**

- Carlos Colindres and Rebecca Tallman, First Nations Health Authority

This presentation will summarize and define the role of First Nations Health Authority in the North as it relates to mental health and addictions.

**PRESENTER:**

- Jan Tatlock, Niwikowin Métis Family Services

Discussion of Métis culture and identity and impact on health and wellness. This session will also discuss the importance of culture, identity and impact on wellness in general. The session will also share information regarding traditional healing, past practices and how we are integrating into current practice to improve outcomes, build resiliency and personal capacity.

**Concurrent Panel Session 6E: Theme: Stigma Reduction**

**BREAKING BARRIERS: EMPOWERING MENTAL HEALTH AND ENDING STIGMA**

In this impactful session, Andrea Paquette shares her personal journey with mental health and how it led her to co-found the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society. Combining lived experience with expert insights, she offers educational tools, practical strategies, and real-world examples on how to combat stigma and promote mental wellness. Join Andrea as she empowers audiences to foster understanding, resilience, and a stigma-free future.

**MODERATED BY** TBD

**PRESENTER:**

- Andrea Paquette, Stigma-Free Mental Health Society

**Concurrent Panel Session 6F: Theme: Advocacy / Policy Change / Initiatives**

**WHY NORTHERN BC NEEDS A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL**

This presentation outlines the various problems that have arisen since Riverview Hospital closed in 2012. These problems include those well-known to local governments, such as increased homelessness, drug use, unsafe communities, etc. As well, there are various implications for the functioning of hospitals, police and fire services.

**MODERATED BY** North Central Local Government Association

**PRESENTERS:**

- Dr. Barbara Kane, University Hospital of Northern BC

3:20 PM – 3:30 PM

**Refreshment / Networking Break**

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

**7. PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – RESOURCES: TREATMENT CENTRE**

**MODERATED BY** TBD

**SPEAKER:** Isaac Hernandez, North Wind Wellness Center

TIME	EVENT
4:30 PM	<b>8. CLOSING COMMENTS</b> MODERATED BY North Central Local Government Association
6:00 PM – 6:30 PM	<b>Evening Networking</b>
6:10 PM – 6:30 PM	<b>Evening Dinner Opening Comments</b> MODERATED BY North Central Local Government Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome comments</li> <li>• Sponsor Presentation</li> </ul>
6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	<b>Evening Dinner</b>

# Thursday, November 14, 2024

TIME	EVENT
8:00 AM	<b>Registration Opens and Trade Show (open all day)</b> Morning Refreshments and Baked Goods available.
9:00 AM – 9:30 AM	<b>9. SYMPOSIUM RECONVENES</b> MODERATED BY North Central Local Government Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day 1 Recap</li> </ul>
9:30 AM – 10:30 AM	<b>10. PLENARY PANEL – LOCAL RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CRISIS</b> MODERATED BY City of Prince George <b>SPEAKERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emily Christensen-Sweeney (La Fleur), PG CAT Central Interior Native Health Society</li> <li>• Ruth Caldusch and Jordan Stewart, POUNDS Project Society</li> </ul>
10:30 AM – 10:50 AM	<b>Refreshment / Networking Break</b>
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	<b>11. CONCURRENT SESSIONS</b> <b>Concurrent Panel Session 11A: Theme: Mental Health Awareness for Children and Youth</b> <b>CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE</b> The child and youth mental health and substance use concurrent session presentation is an opportunity for individuals to gain an understanding of the reality of what children, adolescents, and their families are navigating within the mental health and substance use realm. As mental health clinicians situated within a rural northern community this presentation will include firsthand observations, experiences, and statistics that highlight the unique challenges and successes of northern communities. Risk factors specific to demographic will be examined along with signs and symptoms of mental, emotional distress. Focus on early intervention, responses approaches, and support strategies will be explored. <b>MODERATED BY TBD</b> <b>PRESENTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laura Honey and Julia Hintermeister, Saplings Mental Health</li> </ul> <b>Concurrent Panel Session 11B: Theme: Community Services</b> <b>A RURAL AND REMOTE APPROACH FOR INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: FOUNDRY'S JOURNEY OF UNLEARNING AND RE-DEFINING INTEGRATION</b> Foundry offers free and confidential supports for young people ages 12 to 24 – mental healthcare, substance use services, physical & sexual healthcare, youth, and family peer supports, and social services – both online and in-person in communities across BC. The rural and remote community development team at Foundry is implementing several pilot projects to learn from the community experts to collaboratively develop a framework that will meet the unique needs of remote communities in BC. This presentation highlights the innovative, community led projects and lessons learned thus far. <b>MODERATED BY City of Prince George</b> <b>PRESENTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acasia Preston, Raelene Hodgson, and Colleen Purcka, Intake Coordinator, Foundry BC</li> </ul> <b>Concurrent Panel Session 11C: Theme: Addictions and Trades</b> <b>IMPORTANT S**T YOU NEED TO KNOW</b> This session outlines a practical approach to allow workers to speak up and seek support without the stigma attached to talking about mental health and addiction issues. The BC Construction Safety Alliance (BCCSA) offers a comprehensive mental health resource called RE-MIND aiming to improve construction workers' access to mental health information and services, covering topics such as recognizing mental health challenges, alcohol and drug use, unique challenges for women in construction, taking action for self-help, assisting colleagues, and guidance for employers on responding to their team's mental health needs. The RE-MIND project includes an informative website and "The Lone Hunter" video resources, emphasizing that every mind deserves time to "RE-MIND" and that the workplace is an ideal starting point for addressing mental health concerns. In partnership with Telus and Alberta Government a program has been developed aimed at creating a workplace that understands and supports workers' needs that not only benefits the employee, but also benefits their families, communities, and results in a more loyal, productive and safe workforce. <b>MODERATED BY North Central Local Government Association</b> <b>PRESENTERS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ian Robb, Chair, Building Trades of Alberta</li> <li>• Art Reynolds, British Columbia Construction Safety Alliance</li> </ul>



TIME

EVENT

**Concurrent Panel Session 11D: Theme: Culturally Relevant and Safe Services (in-person and )**

**MODERATED BY** Regional District of Fraser-Fort George

**PRESENTERS:**

- Carlos Colindres and Rebecca Tallman, First Nations Health Authority

This presentation will summarize and define the role of First Nations Health Authority in the North as it relates to mental health and addictions.

**PRESENTER:**

- Jan Tatlock, Niwikowin Métis Family Services

Discussion of Métis culture and identity and impact on health and wellness. This session will also discuss the importance of culture, identity and impact on wellness in general. The session will also share information regarding traditional healing, past practices and how we are integrating into current practice to improve outcomes, build resiliency and personal capacity.

**Concurrent Panel Session 11E: Theme: Stigma Reduction**

**BREAKING BARRIERS: EMPOWERING MENTAL HEALTH AND ENDING STIGMA**

In this impactful session, Andrea Paquette shares her personal journey with mental health and how it led her to co-found the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society. Combining lived experience with expert insights, she offers educational tools, practical strategies, and real-world examples on how to combat stigma and promote mental wellness. Join Andrea as she empowers audiences to foster understanding, resilience, and a stigma-free future.

**MODERATED BY** TBD

**PRESENTER:**

- Andrea Paquette, Stigma-Free Mental Health Society

**Concurrent Panel Session 11F: Theme: Advocacy / Policy Change / Initiatives**

**WHY NORTHERN BC NEEDS A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL**

This presentation outlines the various problems that have arisen since Riverview Hospital closed in 2012. These problems include those well known to local governments such as increased homelessness, drug use, unsafe communities, etc. As well, there are various implications for the functioning of hospitals, police and fire services.

**MODERATED BY** North Central Local Government Association

**PRESENTERS:**

- Dr. Barbara Kane, University Hospital of Northern BC

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

**LUNCH AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Corey Hirsch, former NHL goaltender, coach, and Olympic Games silver medalist

1:00 PM – 1:15 PM

**12. PLENARY ADDRESS: SELF-CARE FOR LEADERS PRESENTATION**

**PROFOUND LEADERSHIP THROUGH EMOTION AWARENESS: THE REAL KEY TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

**MODERATED BY** North Central Local Government Association

**PRESENTER:** Mike Skrypnek, Stigma-Free Mental Health Society

1:15 PM – 2:15 PM

**13. PLENARY ADDRESS**

**BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR A SAFER TOMORROW: HOW RECOVERY-INFORMED WORKPLACES CAN STRENGTHEN CONSTRUCTION AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

**MODERATED BY** TBD

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Paul Farnan, University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University

2:15 PM – 2:45 PM

**14. PLENARY ADDRESS: SIGNING OF THE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS ACCORD**

**MODERATED BY** North Central Local Government Association

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM

**15. CLOSING COMMENTS**

**MODERATED BY** North Central Local Government Association

- Co-Hosts Closing Comments



# Concurrent Sessions Summaries

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024  
2:15 PM – 3:20 PM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024  
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

## Session 6A and 11A: Theme: Mental Health Awareness for Children and Youth

### TITLE: CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

The child and youth mental health and substance use concurrent session presentation is an opportunity for individuals to gain an understanding of the reality of what children, adolescents, and their families are navigating within the mental health and substance use realm. As mental health clinicians situated within a rural northern community this presentation will include first hand observations, experiences, and statistics that highlight the unique challenges and successes of northern communities. Risk factors specific to demographic will be examined along with signs and symptoms of mental, emotional distress. Focus on early intervention, responses approaches, and support strategies will be explored.

MODERATED BY TBD

#### PRESENTERS:

- Laura Honey and Julia Hintermeister, Saplings Mental Health

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## Session 6B (in person and Zoom) and 11B: Theme: Community Services

### A RURAL AND REMOTE APPROACH FOR INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: FOUNDRY'S JOURNEY OF UNLEARNING AND RE-DEFINING INTEGRATION

Foundry offers free and confidential supports for young people ages 12 to 24 – mental healthcare, substance use services, physical & sexual healthcare, youth, and family peer supports, and social services – both online and in-person in communities across BC. The rural and remote community development team at Foundry is implementing several pilot projects to learn from the community experts to collaboratively develop a framework that will meet the unique needs of remote communities in BC. This presentation highlights the innovative, community led projects and lessons learned thus far.

MODERATED BY City of Prince George

#### PRESENTERS:

- Acasia Preston, Service Development Leader
- Raelene Hodgson, Rural and Remote Community Development Specialist
- Colleen Purcka, Intake Coordinator, Foundry BC

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## Session 6C and 11C: Theme: Addictions and Trades

### TITLE: IMPORTANT S\*\*T YOU NEED TO KNOW

MODERATED BY North Central Local Government Association

#### PRESENTERS:

- Ian Robb, Chair, Building Trades of Alberta
- Art Reynolds, BCCSA Regional Safety Advisor Northern BC

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## Session 6D and 11D (in person and Zoom) : Theme: Culturally Relevant and Safe Services

Discussion of Metis culture and identity and impact on health and wellness. This session will also discuss the importance of culture, identity and impact on wellness in general. The session will also share information regarding traditional healing, past practices and how we are integrating into current practice to improve outcomes, build resiliency and personal capacity.

MODERATED BY REgional District of Fraser-Fort George

#### PRESENTERS:

- FNHA – TBC
- Jan Tatlock, Executive Director, Niwikowin Métis Family Services

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## Session 6E and 11E: Theme: Stigma Reduction

### BREAKING BARRIERS: EMPOWERING MENTAL HEALTH AND ENDING STIGMA

In this impactful session, Andrea Paquette shares her personal journey with mental health and how it led her to co-found the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society. Combining lived experience with expert insights, she offers educational tools, practical strategies, and real-world examples on how to combat stigma and promote mental wellness. Join Andrea as she empowers audiences to foster understanding, resilience, and a stigma-free future."

MODERATED BY TBD

#### PRESENTER:

- Andrea Paquette, President and Co-Founder, Stigma-Free Mental Health

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## Session 6F and 11F: Theme: Advocacy / Policy Change / Initiatives

### TITLE: WHY NORTHERN BC NEEDS A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

This presentation outlines the various problems that have arisen since Riverview Hospital closed in 2012. These problems include those well-known to local governments, such as increased homelessness, drug use, unsafe communities, etc. As well, there are various implications for the functioning of hospitals, police and fire services.

MODERATED BY North Central Local Government Association

#### PRESENTERS:

- Dr. Barbara Kane, Head of the Psychology Department at UNBC

# Speakers

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024

9:45 AM – 10:00 AM SYMPOSIUM AND ACCORD OVERVIEW



## Terry Robert

### SYMPOSIUM AND ACCORD OVERVIEW

Terry Robert serves as the Executive Director of the North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA), representing over 240 elected officials from more than 40 local and First Nation governments across North Central British Columbia. In this role, he advances the NCLGA's mission by facilitating strategic collaboration, promoting effective governance, advocating for regional interests, and fostering partnerships. With a focus on conflict resolution and capacity building, Terry leverages his background in resource management, public education, and engagement to support elected officials and drive sustainable development in the region.

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION



## Melissa Bloodoff

### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Melissa Bloodoff (RCC, MEd, BSW) has grown up in Prince George and has a Masters Degree in Educational Counselling and a Bachelors Degree in Social Work. She is a Registered Clinical Counsellor with BCACC. Melissa has 14 years of counselling experience working as a Child, Youth and Family Therapist. She also trained in couples work during her Masters Degree and enjoys couple and family work. Melissa has experience working with conflict and family dynamics, anxiety, depression, suicide, mood disorders, and trauma/abuse. She is trained in Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Trauma Focused CBT, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Adolescents (IPT-A), Early Psychosis Intervention, and Emotion Focused Family Therapy (EFFT), as well as EMDR for trauma. Melissa has been a Supervisor at Intersect for over 10 years providing support to staff and doing some specialized counselling support for clients. When she is not working, Melissa enjoys family time, hot tubbing, reading, watching tv/movies, travel and time with friends.



## Andrea Derban

### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Andrea Derban is a seasoned Public Health Nurse with over 33 years of experience in three of BC's five Regional Health Authorities as a Communicable Disease Control Lead. She was the province's first Vaccine Educator at the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) for seven years, moving on to a management position with the Ministry of Health for four years.

In 2013 Andrea had the immense honour of joining Canada's first First Nations Health Authority as the Clinical Nurse Lead for HIV and Hepatitis C. In 2020 she joined two joint projects between the BCCDC and Community Action Initiative (CAI) as the Clinical Lead for Episodic Overdose Prevention. Additionally, she assisted the Local Leadership United Project that supported elected officials across the province with their responses to the current Toxic Drug Crisis.

Currently, Andrea works in a consulting role with CAI to continue to support communities and Health Authorities across the province in serving equity-deserving populations which includes advocating for access to a regulated drug supply.

Driven by a passion for social justice, Andrea is a dedicated team member striving for systemic changes required to better serve people who use substances. Andrea is a graduate of the University of British Columbia with a baccalaureate degree in nursing.

Andrea and her family have the immense privilege of living, working and playing in the Tseycum First Nation Territory, colonially known as North Saanich.



## Janine Stevenson

### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Janine's heritage is of Orkney and English descent. She has raised her daughter, worked and played in the unceded and occupied territories of the x̱m̱əḵ'əy̱əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and se'íḻwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) people for the past 32 years.

Janine was with the BCCDC as a street nurse for 18 years throughout British Columbia and in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside during which she worked with street youth, sex workers and people who struggle with addiction. She has been involved in creating and teaching workshops for public health nurses, healthcare professionals, peers and elected officials regarding sexual health, harm reduction and substance use throughout BC including First Nation communities for 3 decades. In 2014 Janine joined the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) there she had the role of the STBBI and Harm Reduction CDC Nurse Specialist, manager of the Indigenous Wellness Team and Lead for the Compassion, Inclusion and Engagement Team (CIE), a FNHA & BCCDC initiative. The teams were part of the FNHA response to the overdose crisis throughout the province. Most recently she has been the Director of Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects at the non-profit Community Action Initiative (CAI). At CAI she led Local Leadership United, a project that aimed to support elected officials to deal with the challenges brought by the toxic drug crisis in BC. Today, as a private consultant, Janine continues to partner with CAI, regional health authorities, and elected officials to support provincial projects that deal with the toxic drug crisis in BC. When not at work, she and her partner enjoy biking, gardening and spoiling their cat, Tom.



## Julia Hintermeister

### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – BREAKING DOWN SILOS; COLLABORATION ACROSS THE REGION; CONCURRENT SESSION 6A: THEME: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Julia Hintermeister is a Registered Clinical Counselor and Approved Clinical Supervisor. Julia achieved her Masters in Child Art Psychotherapy from the School of Medicine at the University College of Dublin in Ireland in 2013. In the years that have followed she has worked both independently as a psychotherapist and a clinical supervisor, as well as on a variety of multidisciplinary teams. Julia has worked with children and youth navigating a variety of concerns but currently specializes in emergency mental health, chronic and acute trauma, grief, anxiety, substance use disorders, depression and self-harm.

Over the years Julia has had the honor of calling Canada, Kenya, Ireland, Laos and Botswana home. Across those countries Julia has worked as a psychosocial consultant developing award winning mental health programming and providing capacity building of mental health professionals.

In September 2019 Julia and her young family returned to Canada moving to Fort St. John. Shortly after arriving Julia was connected with the force of nature that is Laura Honey. They quickly bonded over their passion for child and youth mental health and their frustrations over the lack of services in the region. From there, Saplings Mental Health Services was founded in an effort to fill the gaps in mental health services in their northern, rural community. Since that time Saplings has grown to a team of mental health professionals running a variety of inpatient and outpatient services in partnership with Northern Health, MCFD, the city of Fort St John, and School District 60. Julia, Laura and Saplings operate with an endless hope for health at the heart of all that they do and they pride themselves on providing simple solutions to complex problems.



## Laura Honey

### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – BREAKING DOWN SILOS; COLLABORATION ACROSS THE REGION; CONCURRENT SESSION 6A: THEME: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In the last 20 years, Laura Honey has been wrapping herself up in the world of the social work and counselling. She has had the privilege of working in a variety of sectors and positions, primarily alongside families, children, and adolescents. She has practiced throughout the province of BC, including various location on Vancouver Island, Kelowna, Gibsons, and Fort St. John.

Starting in 2005, Laura began attending social work classes through Vancouver Island University. In 2010, she obtained a bachelor of social work from the University of British Columbia Okanagan with a specialization in child welfare. She has been a registered social worker with the BC College of Social Workers for twelve years. In 2016, Laura completed a masters in counseling psychology through the University of Victoria. She is a registered clinical counsellor and has been in private practice for seven years.

Throughout her years in front line support services, child protection, child and youth mental health, child and adolescent sexual trauma, emergency mental health, forensics, and program management, Laura has had the honour of witnessing incredible healing, change, and community collaboration. In 2022, Laura was the co-recipient of 'Social Worker of the Year' award through the BC Association of Social Workers for her work in developing child and youth mental health & substance use programs in rural northern communities. Three years ago, Laura and her brilliantly ambitious colleague, Julia Hintermeister set out to tackle the service gaps in mental health and substance use service in their small rural community. Today Laura and Julia are the Directors of Saplings Mental Health Services, a small mental health agency that provides eleven different mental health and substance use programs for adolescents in the Fort St. John and Dawson Creek area.



## Chris Kinch

### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – BREAKING DOWN SILOS; COLLABORATION ACROSS THE REGION

Chris Kinch is Vice President of Service Delivery Northern BC & Yukon. Joining Connective in 2022 as the organization prepared to open its first housing programs in Northern BC. A resident of Prince George for more than 20 years after moving to the community to attend UNBC. Chris is an experienced non-profit leader whose work has focused on community-based programming and services to improve health outcomes in communities through solutions-focused partnership and service development. Growing and developing the Northern BC Connective team to more than 100 staff providing services throughout Northern BC over the past two years and growing and supporting the 130 staff providing services in the Yukon Region. Connective is a non-profit organization with a history that stretches back over 90 years in the Vancouver region. Today we are proud to work in communities throughout BC and in the Yukon. In recent years we have experienced significant growth in Northern BC and appreciate the opportunity to introduce ourselves and our approach to person-centered services through community-based supports including outreach, housing, and employment services. We recognize in our work that we cannot do it alone and the complex challenges communities face related to the experiences of homelessness, mental health, and substance use will require collaboration and coordination. We are excited to formally introduce ourselves, the work we are doing and discussing how we can strengthen collaboration.



## Corey Hirsch

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Corey Hirsch is a former NHL goaltender, coach and an Olympic Games silver medalist. Following his professional hockey career and after dealing with his own mental health struggles, he embarked on a mission to open a conversation to end the stigma around mental health.

In February 2017, Corey wrote a piece for The Players' Tribune, sharing publicly his mental health diagnosis and suicide attempt. His story sparked important conversations within hockey and beyond, as more athletes began to open up about mental health.

Today, Corey is an advocate in the battle to end the stigma around mental health. He is an engaging speaker that educates, motivates, and inspires his audience. He gives hope to others struggling by showing vulnerability and letting people know they are not alone. He joined ICBA as their Wellness Ambassador in 2022, providing mental health content across Canada for ICBA's Workplace Wellness program.



## Graham Hall

### PLENARY ADDRESS – RESOURCES: MENTAL HEALTH & SELF CARE FOR LEADERS

#### GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IS AN EVERYONE ISSUE: THE CURRENT CRISIS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND POWERFUL SOLUTIONS FOR WELLNESS / PROFOUND LEADERSHIP THROUGH EMOTION AWARENESS: THE REAL KEY TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Graham Hall has recently been appointed as the Executive Lead for the Mental Health and Substance Use Service Network in Northern BC. With over 15 years of experience in mental health and substance use programs, Graham has spent the past eight years managing Specialized Community Mental Health and Substance Use programs in Prince George.

Graham holds a Master of Health Studies degree, which has equipped him with a strong foundation in research, health sciences, and policy development. In his new role, he will work closely with Medical Leads Dr. Gerrard Prigmore (Substance Use) and Dr. Barb Kane (Mental Health) to foster inter-professional collaboration and enhance the care journey for individuals requiring mental health and substance use services.

Beyond his professional achievements, Graham is deeply committed to his family and community. He lives in Prince George with his wife Amy and their three active children. His dedication to both his family and his community underscores his passion for making a positive impact on the lives of others.

Graham's unique blend of academic knowledge and practical experience positions him well to lead improvements in the quality and accessibility of mental health and substance use services in Northern Health.



## Mike Skrypnek

### PLENARY ADDRESS – RESOURCES: MENTAL HEALTH & SELF CARE FOR LEADERS

**GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IS AN EVERYONE ISSUE: THE CURRENT CRISIS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND POWERFUL SOLUTIONS FOR WELLNESS / PROFOUND LEADERSHIP THROUGH EMOTION AWARENESS: THE REAL KEY TO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Mike is an executive leadership expert and strategist helping entrepreneurs & industry leaders find their happiness, calm & love, so they can share their wisdom & wealth to amplify entrepreneurial success.

He has a gift for normalizing narratives so people can share their challenges and identify ways to overcome their limitations. Often what holds us back is what happened to us as we grew up. Negative events that caused trauma in life embedded patterns, or instincts, that were designed to protect us. In our modern world these protections often held us back. In doing, so they can strain our families, relationships and work. Not everyone experienced childhood abuse, but almost everyone has lived under toxic-stress at some point. Many people feel they are living below their potential. Mike shows you ways to gain insight needed to develop the awareness to overcome any limitation keeping you from your own personal or professional success.

Mike is an international bestseller of nine books, a keynote speaker, men's mental health advocate, and corporate wellness trainer. He is a sought after business strategist who has shared his insights and wisdom with thousands of passionate purpose driven entrepreneurs, business leaders and executives. His coaching focuses on purpose at the intersection of personal, professional and philanthropic development.



## Raelene Hodgson

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6B: THEME: RURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

**A RURAL AND REMOTE APPROACH FOR INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: FOUNDRY'S JOURNEY OF UNLEARNING AND RE-DEFINING INTEGRATION**

Raelene Hodgson works in Rural and Remote Community Development at Foundry BC. She comes to this work as a mental health clinician with a background in working with Indigenous youth through land based programming. Raelene currently resides on the lands of the Lil'wat people in Pemberton BC and is passionate about increasing accessible services to youth in rural and remote communities.



## Acasia Preston

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6B: THEME: RURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

**A RURAL AND REMOTE APPROACH FOR INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: FOUNDRY'S JOURNEY OF UNLEARNING AND RE-DEFINING INTEGRATION**

Acasia Preston is the Leader for Service Development at Foundry BC. Acasia has worked in various mental health systems as a service provider and is passionate about enhancing geographic equity for health and wellness services for young people and families across the vast and beautiful province of British Columbia. She lives as a guest on Wet'suwet'en territory and enjoys spending time in nature, connecting with others in community and amplifying the voices of those more distanced from health and wellness decisions.



## Colleen Purcka

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6B: THEME: RURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES

**A RURAL AND REMOTE APPROACH FOR INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: FOUNDRY'S JOURNEY OF UNLEARNING AND RE-DEFINING INTEGRATION**

Colleen Purcka is a registered clinical counsellor and has been with Foundry Virtual BC for 3 years. Her background includes working extensively with youth and families in rural and remote communities, where she often undertook diverse roles to meet the needs of the community and witnessed the challenges when gaps cannot be filled. She is passionate about exploring innovative approaches to enable youth and families to access essential health and wellness services from their communities, eliminating the need for travel.



## Art Reynolds

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6C: THEME: ADDICTIONS AND TRADES

Art began his construction career in the 1970s and has seen safety become the most important factor of construction projects. His experience includes more than 25 years as a journeyman ironworker and both mining and sawmill construction. He also holds a Certificate of Health and Safety from BCIT. Knowing that industry experience and safety knowledge would be a formidable combination, he moved from the trades to a full-time safety advisory career. He joined the BCCSA as a Regional Safety Advisor in 2014. Art's goal: "to provide simple, practical solutions to ensure everyone goes home safely at the end of the work day."



## Ian Robb

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6C: THEME: ADDICTIONS AND TRADES

Chairman, Building Trades of Alberta (BTA) highlights the success of the BTA's unique Building Resiliency Program. The program offers new options for workers and their families to reclaim a positive pathway as it addresses mental health, addiction, and dependency challenges with the support of the workplace. As a passionate advocate for Recovery-Informed Workplaces, Ian highlights ways in which workplaces that support and empower individuals to navigate these challenges inspire loyalty and productivity, while leading to better health and safety outcomes.



## Carlos Colindres

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6D: THEME: CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND SAFE SERVICES

Carlos Colindres (he/him) serves as the Director of Health Emergency Management, Environmental Public Health, and Mental Health Wellness for the Northern Region of the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA).

Born in Guatemala, Carlos spent most of his life in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Wendat peoples. He had the privilege of working, living, and playing in the ancestral and unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>mək<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and se'ílilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations for 12 years and currently resides on unceded and unsurrendered Wet'suwet'en territory, where he feels privileged to support First Nation community health initiatives in his role at FNHA. His educational background has centred around Public Health and his professional experiences mostly focus on addressing and researching inequities centred on an indigenous perspective of health.



## Rebecca Tallman

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6D: THEME: CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND SAFE SERVICES

Rebecca is a settler with mixed European ancestry originally from Robinson Huron Territory in Northern Ontario. She moved to BC in 2011 and obtained a Master of Arts in International Studies (2014) and a Master of Social Work (2017) from UNBC. For the past nine years Rebecca had the honour to live on Tsek'ene Traditional Territory in Kwadacha (Fort Ware), BC where she worked as a mental health counsellor and more recently as the Director of Health and Wellness. In summer 2024, Rebecca took on the role of Manager of Mental Health and Wellness with First Nations Health Authority Northern Region and relocated to the hustle and bustle of Lheidli T'enneh Territory. Rebecca has a passion for northern and remote community-based practice and creating culturally safe and trauma informed mental health and wellness services for Indigenous communities. In her role as Manager of Mental Health and Wellness she oversees a team of professionals that provide community based mental health and toxic drug response to the 55 Indigenous communities across Northern BC.



## Jan Tatlock

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6D: THEME: CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND SAFE SERVICES

Jan Tatlock is the Executive Director for Niwikowin Metis Family Service Society. Jan has worked in both health and social services for more than 30 years and has a passion for improving health and wellness of the most vulnerable in community. As the new ED for Niwikowin, Jan is committed to strengthening Metis Culture and changing practice to reflect Metis values and culture, recognizing how it positively impacts resiliency.



## Andrea Paquette

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6E: THEME: STIGMA REDUCTION

#### BREAKING BARRIERS: EMPOWERING MENTAL HEALTH AND ENDING STIGMA

Andrea Paquette serves as the President and Co-Founder of the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society. In 2009, she began sharing her personal mental health journey, which evolved into a national charity focusing on mental health and anti-stigma initiatives. The Society provides educational tools and training across Canada through key initiatives such as the Stigma-Free School and the Rural Mental Wellness Programs. Andrea is deeply passionate about these offerings, as they not only deliver vital mental health education but also foster understanding and acceptance. By reaching diverse audiences across the country, the programs inspire resilience, reduce stigma, and create supportive environments for all.

Andrea has delivered over 850 presentations across the country and has been recognized with prestigious accolades, including the 2023 Alberta Blue Cross Faces of Wellness award and the 2019 President's Commendation from the Psychiatric Association of Canada. Through her work, Andrea continues to foster awareness, understanding, and acceptance.

Her motto: "No matter our challenges, we can all live extraordinary lives."



## Dr. Barbara Kane

### CONCURRENT SESSION 6F: THEME: ADVOCACY / POLICY CHANGE / INITIATIVES

Dr. Barb Kane has been practising psychiatry in Prince George since 1990. She is the head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University Hospital of Northern British Columbia (UHNBC).



## Isaac Hernandez

### PLENARY ADDRESS – RESOURCES: TREATMENT CENTRE

Isaac Hernandez, serves as the current Executive Director of the North Wind Wellness Centre in Dawson Creek, [www.northwindwellnesscentre.ca](http://www.northwindwellnesscentre.ca), September 2003 to Present. His responsibility includes providing clinical supervising to a team of addiction counsellors and supports workers as well as overseeing the overall functioning of the centre. Isaac serves as a board member for the BC Addictions Recovery Association <https://bcaddictionrecovery.ca> He is certified as an Indigenous Addictions Specialist III, and is one of the founding members and first elected president of the Indigenous Certification Board of Canada (ICBOC), [www.icboc.ca](http://www.icboc.ca), March 2005 to January 2010.

Born in El Salvador, Central America, and descendant of the Náhuatl people, Isaac obtained a Bachelor of Religious Education in Psychology and a Bachelor of Commerce in Business Administration in his homeland. After immigrating into Canada in 1986, Isaac continued his academic studies obtaining a Master of Science in Counselling Psychology and a Master of Divinities in Comparative Religion from Trinity Western University, 1996 in Langley, BC.

Isaac has served to and with Indigenous people in different parts of the world. In El Salvador with Pipils & Lencas, Honduras with Lencas & Miskitos, Guatemala with K'iche' (Quiché) & Kaqchikel, Mexico with Mayas & Aztecs, Colombia with Incas in the Putumayo, and Canada with Dane-zaa (Beaver), Cree, Black Foot, Tse'khene, & Slavey. He has also interacted with Mandaya Tribes in the Philippines, and Tibetans & Mongolians in China. In addition, Isaac has been a presenter to the "Healing our Spirit Worldwide" Conference, Canada, 2006; Hawaii, 2010; and New Zealand, 2015. His 42-year-expertise includes Spirituality, Counselling, Leadership, and Management. Isaac professional and volunteer assignments, e.g. Minister of Religion, Clinical Counsellor, University Assistant Professor, and Consultant; have always maintained a close connection with the Addictions Treatment/Recovery work at the professional and personal level.

Isaac professional development includes among others: Complex Trauma Development and Treatment, Trauma Informed Care, Domestic Violence Training: Healing from Trauma through an Attachment Informed Lens I & II, Narrative Approaches to Therapy, and Suicide Intervention Training.



## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2024

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – LOCAL RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CRISIS

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### Ruth Byra

#### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – LOCAL RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CRISIS

Ruth Byra is the Executive Director of The POUNDS Project in Prince George. Originally from Barcelona, Ruth emigrated to Canada 16 years ago. She has been a settler and guest living and working with deep gratitude on the unceded ancestral territory of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation since 2018. Ruth is passionate about parenting, growing food, and outdoor work and games. The POUNDS Project has given Ruth the opportunity to “walk her talk” by supporting its mission which is based on one of her personal core values: compassion for others and oneself.



### Emily Christensen-Sweeney

#### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – LOCAL RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CRISIS

As a white settler on these lands, Emily has spent the majority of her life on Lheidli T'enneh Territory. She began her journey working in the downtown core of Prince George in 2017 while completing her Bachelor degree in Psychology from UNBC. Since then, Emily has been fortunate to work alongside Indigenous community members, as well as individuals who are living with Mental Health challenges and Substance Use. Emily became the Coordinator for the Prince George Community Action Team in 2022, working alongside Persons with Lived & Living Experience with Substance Use, community members, and social services representatives to support the work being done to end the Unregulated Toxic Drug Crisis.



### Jordan Stewart

#### PLENARY PANEL ADDRESS – LOCAL RESPONSE TO MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CRISIS

Jordan Stewart is a Registered Nurse and the founder of The POUNDS Project Society; she has been working in mental health and addictions in Prince George since 2017. Jordan has developed and operated overdose prevention sites, a harm reduction drop-in center, low-barrier supportive housing for people who use substances, and the first FTIR drug-checking program in Northern BC. Her belief in community stewardship, Indigenous rights, and equitable social justice drives a practice that is grounded in trauma-informed principles and a holistic approach to wellness.

1:15 PM – 2:15 PM PLENARY ADDRESS

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### Dr. Paul Farnan

#### PLENARY ADDRESS

##### BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR A SAFER TOMORROW: HOW RECOVERY-INFORMED WORKPLACES CAN STRENGTHEN CONSTRUCTION AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Dr. Paul Farnan shares international initiatives and research insights into the importance of fostering inclusive environments that support the journey of recovery and the many ways in which workplaces can become catalysts for positive change and healing. He also explores the ripple effects of workplace peer support on overall employee and family well-being, productivity, and retention in the construction industry. A 30-year veteran in the field of addiction and occupational medicine, Dr. Farnan is a Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Family Practice at the University of British Columbia, and Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University.

# The Development of the Mental Health and Addictions Accord

## OVERVIEW

The Mental Health and Addictions Accord is a joint initiative designed to address the urgent mental health and addiction challenges facing Central and Northern British Columbia. This Accord establishes a collaborative advocacy framework, bringing together local governments, First Nations, healthcare providers, service agencies and community organizations. By uniting these partners, the Accord aims to advance positive solutions to improve services and outcomes for individuals affected by mental health and addiction, as well as related intersecting issues.

## REVIEW PROCESS

We extend our gratitude to everyone who provided feedback on the Draft Accord. The external review period concluded on October 4, following the release of the Draft on September 25 to NCLGA member communities, First Nation band councils, mental health service providers, and key stakeholders in Central and Northern BC. Prior to the review period, collaborative workshops were held on June 28 and September 26. The feedback received has been invaluable, capturing a range of perspectives and addressing the needs of diverse agencies and communities.

Recognizing the importance of broadening engagement, we are committed to expanding our network for the next iteration of the Accord. Further engagement efforts will focus on reaching additional groups, including underrepresented communities, community-based organizations, and new partners across the region. Our goal is to ensure that the Accord reflects an even wider array of voices and insights, fostering more inclusive and comprehensive solutions to the challenges of mental health and addiction.

## SIGNING CEREMONY

The signing ceremony is scheduled for November 14 at 2:15 PM (PST) in the Main Hall. This ceremony will symbolize the unified commitment of all signatories to advancing mental health and addictions initiatives throughout the region.

- If your agency was unable to endorse the Accord before the Symposium, endorsements can still be submitted after the event. Please contact Bettina Johnson at [bjohnson@nclga.ca](mailto:bjohnson@nclga.ca) to find out more.

## LIVING DOCUMENT AND NEXT ITERATION IN 2025

The Accord is intended to be a living document, outlining shared principles and actions to drive improvements in mental health and addictions services across Central and Northern British Columbia. Recognizing the need to continuously engage and understand the diverse needs of communities and organizations, the Accord is set for review and an update in June of 2025.

- If your local government or agency missed the review and comment period, which closed on October 4, please email [bjohnson@nclga.ca](mailto:bjohnson@nclga.ca) to be included in the next round of commentary.

We look forward to further incorporating feedback and ensuring the Accord represents a broad consensus. Your continued support and input are vital to this effort, and we are committed to fostering an inclusive process that reflects the voices of all our communities. Thank you for supporting this important initiative.

# 2024 Mental Health and Addictions Accord

**We, the undersigned, recognize the urgent and ongoing need to address the mental health and addictions crisis affecting our communities in Central and Northern British Columbia.**

We acknowledge the profound impact of mental health and addictions on individuals, families, caregivers, communities, and our society as a whole.

We recognize the inherent dignity of all who live and work in Central and Northern British Columbia, their right to appropriate mental health and addictions services, and the need to work together to improve services and outcomes for those affected by mental health, addictions and their related intersections.

Therefore, we hereby commit to the following principles and actions, working collaboratively and leveraging our collective resources to advance positive solutions:

## PRINCIPLES

### 1. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP:

We acknowledge that addressing mental health and addictions requires a collaborative and dedicated approach, involving government agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, Indigenous communities, educational institutions, businesses, and individuals with lived experience and their caregivers.

### 2. RECOGNITION OF COMPLEXITIES FACING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES:

We recognize that Indigenous communities in Central and Northern British Columbia have complex historical, cultural, geographic, social, and economic dynamics that need to be considered.

### 3. RECOGNITION OF COMPLEXITIES FACING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

We recognize that local governments face unique complexities, including limited resources, capacity constraints, geographic isolation, and diverse community needs.

### 4. RECOGNITION OF COMPLEXITIES FACING CENTRAL AND NORTHERN BC:

We recognize that Central and Northern British Columbia face regional complexities, such as remote locations, industrial and remote worksites, harsh weather conditions, limited healthcare infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities.

### 5. STIGMA REDUCTION:

We recognize that stigma surrounding mental health and addictions often deters individuals from seeking and receiving help and accessing appropriate care in a timely manner.

### 6. PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION:

We understand the critical importance of prevention and early intervention in addressing mental health and addictions. We recognize while many of the most severe mental illnesses are not preventable, many people can be considerably helped by appropriate and timely treatment.

### 7. ACCESSIBLE AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT SERVICES:

We acknowledge the necessity for accessible, culturally relevant mental health and addictions services that meet the diverse and evolving needs of our communities.

### 8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND RECOVERY-ORIENTED CARE:

We recognize the vital role of community-level supports and services at all stages, alongside timely and accessible recovery-oriented care, in promoting the well-being and recovery of individuals affected by mental health and addictions. We recognize the importance of education on severe mental illness, and the availability of long-term treatment options.

### 9. EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

We acknowledge that marginalized and underserved populations, including Indigenous communities, racialized groups and 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, face disproportionate levels of mental health and addiction challenges and are more likely to experience poverty and that this reality needs to be addressed.

## ACTIONS

### 1. INFORMATION SHARING AND COORDINATION:

We are committed to sharing information and coordinating efforts to improve the delivery of mental health and addictions services across Central and Northern British Columbia. This includes sharing best practices, data, and resources to enhance service coordination and integration, as well as the collecting and sharing of baseline data to monitor progress on the actions of the Accord.

### 2. ADVOCACY:

- We are committed to advocating to the Provincial Government for increased funding, resources, and policy changes that support the timely delivery of mental health and addictions services in our communities. This includes advocating for investments in prevention, education, early intervention, treatment, and long-term recovery supports, as well as for policies that address the social determinants of health.
- We are committed to advocating for education and awareness initiatives to challenge stigma, enhance understanding, and foster empathy and support for all those affected by mental health and addictions.
- We are committed to advocating for prevention and education programs, early screening initiatives, and timely access to intervention services for children, youth, families and caregivers to address mental health and addictions before they escalate.
- We are committed to advocating for the development of services that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of all community members in Central and Northern British Columbia.
- We are committed to advocating for the development of local, community-based support services, peer support programs, and diverse recovery-oriented treatment options that empower individuals and their caregivers on their recovery journeys. This includes promoting social integration and community connection as vital in recovery-oriented treatment. We commit to advocating for solutions that address systemic inequities, promote social justice, and ensure that efforts to address the mental health and addictions crisis are inclusive, respectful, and equitable for all community members.

### 3. SHARED VISION FOR CENTRAL AND NORTHERN BC:

We are committed to advocating for the development of a shared vision for Central and Northern British Columbia, identifying supports needed in smaller communities, and advocating for increased funding and policy changes.

## CONCLUSION

In signing this Mental Health and Addictions Accord, we affirm our dedication to working collaboratively and advocating for positive change to address the mental health and addictions crisis in Central and Northern British Columbia. We support this Accord as a living document with flexibility to evolve into the future.

We pledge to uphold the principles of collaboration, cultural safety, equity, and prevention as we work towards a future where all residents can thrive in body, mind, and spirit.

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