

August 21, 2018

## Concurrent Sessions

### *Updating the Evidence - Presentations and Conversation*

Five concurrent sessions will be offered in thematic areas to share evidence that complements and adds to our understanding of child and youth mental health promotion. Each session will include three presentations on evidence followed by a moderated discussion of the questions:

- *How does this work fit into and advance the 2017 Call to Action?*
- *What are the implications for upstream investment and a whole society approach to mental health promotion?*

Results of these discussions will contribute to advancing the [Call to Action](#).

### **Session 1: Girls & Young Women**

#### **a) Together We Can: An Evidenced Based Program**

Presenters: Stephannie Ruckstuhl, NBCC; Chris Gilham, St. FX University

Historically, research has shown that adolescent girls have a high risk of poor self-image and self-esteem that leads to developmental deficits. These poor self-images are carried into adulthood. It is generally believed that there are many benefits to having a positive view of the self and the pro-social skills that coincide with a positive view of self. Research noted by the Girls Action Foundation showed that pro-social behaviour in young girls drops by 35 percent in the five years between middle school and the end of high school (Girls Action Foundation, 2012). Researchers with the NBCC and St Francis Xavier University along with active stakeholders: Anglophone South District School Board, Horizon Health Mental Health team, Antigonish Women's Resource Center and Sexual Assault Services Association, and CASM Group are working to reverse that trend through their SSHRC-sponsored development of and research on a pro-social role modeling and peer mentoring intervention program.

The literature demonstrates success through implementing "girl-specific programs" (as identified through the Canadian Girls Action Foundation); programs designed specifically for girls can play a key protective role in their healthy social development. Using this model ensures that the activities are in keeping with pillars of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), the project introduced workshop-based learning approaches, popular education, role modeling and peer mentoring. The Team reached out to females in the beginning of grade 7 and are continuing to follow them through to grade 10 in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. The intervention was to create a safe place for young females to learn, share and build their pro-social skills, including self-esteem. The program created an environment conducive to the following elements, marked as pillars in SEL: participatory (involved young females in program design and facilitation), empowerment (supported young females to express themselves and take action), asset-based (built skills and focused on strengths), culturally relevant (respect for and integration of diversity), and community involved (engaged community members through mentorship and other means). Approximately 48 NBCC students over 3 years helped facilitate the peer-to-peer mentoring program.

The researchers assessed the effectiveness of the program using both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Assessment tools include the Developmental Assets Survey (The Search Institute), group observations, focus group interviews, and photo voice. Concomitantly, participatory action research

methodology guided data collection with and from the participants. Participants shared their learning by choosing from a wide selection of response modalities including Digital Storytelling, social media, audio and video recording, and other arts-based responses such as creative journaling, craft-making, and painting, for example.

This research had a strong focus on the empowerment of girls in rural NB, by helping them to critically troubleshoot the everyday social media messages they receive, as well as interrupt the power imbalances they faced within the traditional gender binary along with other social issues. These same issues have been echoed throughout much of Atlantic Canada as our pilot project in Antigonish also noted similar issues through the DAP assessments. With increased self-esteem and pro social skills, we showed this intervention improved the lives of girls in middle and early high schools, thereby increasing school success, and setting the foundations for success post K – 12 schooling. At the Atlantic Summer Institute, we plan to share our data from the information gathered throughout the 3 years of SSHRC sponsored research project, including the intervention program curriculum.

#### Connection with the ASI theme:

This project makes a strong connection with the theme, as it involves acting together to support young women and early adolescences to successful transition from prepubescence to young women hood. This research developed a program for all girls focusing on the prosocial skill as outlined by SEL to change their abilities and therefore changing the Canadian statistic of 2011. This program was effective as was collaboration with the Board of education, Health care and Canadian Mental health Association.

#### Participants will learn:

Our specific focus was on self-esteem and pro-social skills. We developed a program with the girls using popular education based on Girls Action Foundation activities which use pillars that coincide with SEL pillars. Our project presentation will focus on the methodology we used and our results after 3 years of program implementation. Using both qualitative and quantitative measures. They will see that this program works, changing the Canadian statistics that have proven self-esteem and pro-social skills plummet from grade 7-grade 10.

#### Evidence for policy and practice:

Our project demonstrates "upstream" of the innovation brought forth from both Girls Action Foundation and AWRCSASA. We used the curriculum from 'Amplify' a GAF resource and the program approach from AWRCSASA's Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) and aligned it with the NB comprehensive school health model to create a program based on popular education. The curriculum was prepared in consultation with local school district and child youth mental health services and was voted on by girls participating in the project. Two 6 week sessions was delivered over 2 years in rural New Brunswick. We ran a pilot program in Nova Scotia to assess potential to replicate this approach which showed similar baselines and similar growth and success. The whole society approach comes in as we applied the program to all girls.

#### Presenter:

Stephanie Ruckstuhl  
Instructor / Researcher, NBCC St. Andrews  
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Ms. Stephanie Ruckstuhl is a registered nurse and faculty member of Practical Nursing and Allied Health programs at the New Brunswick Community College. She has over 23 years of experience working in the education and health care sectors. Stephanie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Child and Adolescent Psychology from St. Francis Xavier University and a nursing diploma from the St. Lawrence College of

Applied Arts and Technology and Post Graduate Certificate in Infant mental Health from York University. Stephanie has championed several grass roots community programs throughout her career leading to various research grant awards and recognition. Through her passion and hard work in bringing creative, new programming to her students and community, she was awarded Social Innovation funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. This funding has allowed Stephanie to build the leadership and critical thinking skills of adolescent girls along with providing educators the necessary tools to build this into their curriculum. Stephanie's commitment to this initiative has fostered several new community and academic partnerships throughout Atlantic Canada.

Co-presenter:

Chris Gilham Ph. D.  
Associate Professor, Saint Francis Xavier University

**b) Implementing evidence-based SNAP® program for high-risk girls in Atlantic Canada**

Presenters: Dr. Jennifer Bernier and Lila Pavey, Centre for Building Resilience through Anti-Violence Education (BRAVE)

The Centre for Building Resilience through Anti-Violence Education (BRAVE) started May 2014 as a division of Bryony House funded by Public Safety Canada. BRAVE uses the Stop Now and Plan (SNAP®) program model which is an evidence-based, cognitive-behavioural model developed by the Child Development Institute in Toronto. The primary goal of SNAP® is to help children to stop and think before they act, keep them in school and out of trouble. BRAVE is unique to SNAP® programs as it is the first designated all-girls SNAP® site in the world. BRAVE uses an ecological model offering SNAP® girls, SNAP® Parenting, and SNAP® school programs to offer a globalized support to families. The target population for this program is 112 high-risk girls aged 6-11 to be referred by March 2019. To date, that target goal has been exceeded totaling 226 referrals with currently 188 girls in treatment. Statistical analysis has shown decreased aggression, rule-breaking, oppositional defiant behavior, anxiety, and hyperactivity. There has also been an increase in self-control and problem-solving, self-esteem, academic performance, and family relationships. As SNAP® does focus on the external problem behaviours in children such as bullying, BRAVE has seen significant improvement in internalizing problem behaviours such as anxiety.

Connection with the ASI theme:

BRAVE gives globalized support offering SNAP® girls, SNAP® Parenting, and SNAP® school programs. Each family is given an individualized treatment plan to fulfill their needs and are referred to additional supports to other community partners. Our staff are trained as SNAP® trainers allowing us to offer training for school personal and other community partners that work with the families. By offering these services, it creates a common SNAP® language used by all community partners.

Participants will learn:

Others will learn there is a gap in services for girls ages 6-11 who display aggressive behavior. There is research which suggests there are 7 years of warning signs children display as high-risk behavior leading to bullying, delinquency, and criminalization. BRAVE is unique because we specifically focus on prevention in girls using the SNAP® programs diminishing the risk of bullying, delinquency, and criminalization, and improve caregiver-daughter relationships, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and self-control.

Challenge:

Because of the demand of services at BRAVE and surpassing our target outcomes, we currently find that our physical space is not sufficient to meet the needs of all our clients (in terms of group room size and availability). We are looking for ways to expand our programs and services and offer more onsite groups that may necessitate increased resources for space and staff.

Presenter:

Dr. Jennifer Bernier

Founder and Executive Director, Centre for Building Resilience through Anti-Violence Education (BRAVE)

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Dr. Jennifer Bernier is the Founder and Executive Director of the Centre for Building Resilience through Anti-Violence Education (BRAVE). Dr. Bernier received her doctorate in Community Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University. She has worked for over 15 years on health and justice issues among women and girls. In 2017, Dr. Bernier received the Nova Scotia Minister of Justice's Award for Leadership in Crime Prevention and was recognized as one of the top 30 graduates from Wilfrid Laurier University who has led a life a leadership and purpose to better communities.

Co-presenter:

Lila Pavey

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**c) Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence against Young Women and Girls**

Presenter: Rina Arseneault, Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, UNB

Communication technologies have had a profound impact on the ways in which individuals and groups interact with one another. In Canada, high-profile cases of cyberviolence are forcing communities to engage with issues of online violence and bullying, including the ways these forms of aggression are directed at young women. In 2014, the New Brunswick Association of Social Workers in partnership with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate was granted funding through the Status of Women Canada. The funding was provided to develop a project aimed at addressing cyberviolence against young women and girls. Based on the project study, and it is clear that cyberviolence is a growing issue, and has substantial impacts on mental health. These results are consistent with results of national studies. These may include feelings of depression, powerlessness, anxiety, and anger. Studies on cyberviolence indicate that young women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the issue, and is identified by many youth as a symptom of broader social issues including but not limited to: sexism, racism, body shaming, and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community.

The session objectives are:

- To define cyberviolence, and distinguish between the terms cyberviolence and cyberbullying.
- To identify key findings from the project study and provide context of the issue
- To outline recommendations from youth regarding the prevention and response to cyberviolence.

### Connection with the ASI theme:

Results of this research project suggest that over 50% of youth, ages 16-19, have been affected by cyberviolence. Findings indicated that 26% of youth reported that their first experience of cyberviolence occurred between the ages of 11-13. Participants highlighted the social context of cyberviolence, and related it to broader social issues of gender discrimination, homophobia, and issues relating to body image. According to the online survey, 57% of females reported sending an intimate photo online. This statistic is understood as a symptom of the hypersexualization of women, as men were half as likely to do so. Cyberviolence is a growing issue, with substantial impacts on mental health. These may include feelings of depression, powerlessness, and lower levels of self-esteem, anxiety, and anger. Overwhelmingly, respondents were unaware of the resources available, and felt as though little was being done to combat the issue within their communities. Results from the survey and focus groups highlight a need for increased resources and support, better coordination between existing initiatives, and increased awareness regarding available resources.

### Participants will learn:

Cyberviolence represents a formidable challenge to teachers, policy makers, and law enforcement officials - our research suggests the importance of increased education and awareness, as well as practical strategies and training for adults confronted with this issue. The creation of a safe and accepting atmosphere for youth will prove instrumental in fostering positive outcomes. The participants will learn what youth suggests as possible solution to cyberviolence.

### Evidence for policy and practice:

The involvement of youth, parents, guardians, grandparents, and the community to address the issues of cyberviolence is critical. The final stages of the project aimed to work with youth and community partners to develop, enhance, and carry out collaborative strategies to prevent this form of gender-based violence. This presentation will speak about how have moved forward with the recommendations that came out from this project.

### Presenter:

Rina Arseneault, C.M., MSW, RSW  
Associate Director, Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, UNB  
[rinaa@unb.ca](mailto:rinaa@unb.ca)

Rina is recognized as a social worker, researcher, activist, organizer, author and educator. She has completed extensive research, organized and delivered numerous regional, national and international training sessions and workshops on the subject of violence.

Received the following recognitions:

- 2002, the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation Award.
- 2014, appointed to the Order of Canada.
- 2016 the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Distinguished Service Award.
- 2018, delegate at the 62nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.