



Ontario Peer  
Development Initiative

# 30 YEARS STRONG

**CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**OCTOBER 4 – 5, 2021**



We are very excited to celebrate **“30 Years Strong”** at the Ontario Peer Development Initiative’s 2021 conference. Our peer support philosophy has flourished over the last three decades, through the vital peer services you provide to local communities and our collective grassroots advocacy. We look forward to recognizing our rich history, significant accomplishments, and collaborative efforts throughout the conference.

Rooted in principles of **recovery, hope and individual empowerment**, our movement has grown, professionalized and most importantly, filled crucial needs across Ontario. The pandemic realities only served to highlight our work as being essential to the healthcare delivery that Ontarians deserve.

This year, we have introduced a new Peer Playground format; a more engaging way for us to share information with each other on targeted areas of expertise and interest. And our lineup of speakers is a reflection of our world’s current challenges:

- Promoting diversity and inclusion through our work;
- How our profession was able to deliver critical and continued service to our most underserved demographics through a global pandemic; and
- Using innovation and an evidence-based approach to peer support, as we collectively work towards professionalization and much-needed recognition of within our Province’s healthcare framework

# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## DAY 1 - OCTOBER 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

9:30 – 9:45	<b>Welcome and Conference Opening</b>
9:45 – 10:15	Keynote Address - David Reville
10:15 – 11:00	Promising Data in Consumer/Survivor Initiatives and Organizations: Exploring the Potential to Tell Our Own Stories about the Value and Contributions of CSIs – 20 min. presentation, 25 min. discussion
11:15 – 12:00	The MAPS Conundrum at CMHA Durham – 15 min. presentation, 25 min. discussion
1:30 – 2:30	A Light Through the Darkness: Becoming Effective Allies to Those Struggling Against Oppression and Discrimination – 60 min.
3:00 – 4:00	Parallel Realities: A Communal and Personal Journey – 60 min.
4:00 – 4:15	<b>Closing</b>

## DAY 2 - OCTOBER 5<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

9:30 – 9:45	<b>Welcome</b>
9:45 – 10:30	Peer Support for Young Caregivers in Ontario: One Size Doesn't Fit All - 20 min. presentation, 25 min. discussion
10:45 – 11:30	Establishing an Older Adult Peer Support Program During the Pandemic – 20 min. presentation, 25 min. discussion
1:00 – 2:00	Safer Use Peer Support Line - Peers as Responders in Opioid Overdose/Poisoning – 60 min.
2:15 – 3:00	Peer support in the emergency department: An innovative way to complement care for young adults presenting with mental health and substance use – 20 min. presentation, 25 min. discussion
3:15 – 3:45	Annual General Meeting
5:00 – 7:00	<b>Keynote Performance by Victoria Maxwell and Awards Presentation</b>

# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

OCTOBER 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

10:30 – 11:00

## **Promising Data in Consumer/Survivor Initiatives and Organizations: Exploring the Potential to Tell Our Own Stories about the Value and Contributions of CSIs**

PRESENTERS: TANYA SHUTE AND LAURA PEARSON

Consumer/Survivor Initiatives (CSIs) have been outperforming their funding levels across Ontario since the early 1990s, but have had to fight for their place at the mental health and addictions table ever since. CSIs have been dwindling over the past decade, with only a handful remaining as independent and autonomous organizations. As a response to the continued threat for the legacy of CSIs in Ontario under austerity budgets and relentless system restructuring, we propose a strategic research response, one where we examine the data that currently exists in our sector about our unique and vital contributions to peer wellbeing, our innovations in terms of service and mutual support, and how we benefit our peers and the mental health system better as independent and autonomous organizations. What data do we have in our organizations? How can it be used to not only report on our activities, but protect and preserve our organizations? How can we use it for our own purposes as peers, survivors, and service organizations? Come explore these questions and more.

11:15 – 12:00

## **The MAPS Conundrum at CMHA Durham**

PRESENTER: KALYSHA ECCLESTON

MAPS [Mental Health and Addictions Peer Support] is a pilot 1:1 Peer Support program for persons that have been through the provincial Criminal Justice system. Its objective is to help people reintegrate into the community as productive members. But how do we get such persons to effectively engage with MAPS? The program is voluntary. But persons for whom this program is designed tend to be from socio-economically marginalized communities that, for good reason, have little faith in the Criminal Justice System. How do we get them to realize the potential value MAPS can add to their lives?

1:30 – 2:30

## **A Light Through the Darkness: Becoming Effective Allies to Those Struggling Against Oppression and Discrimination**

PRESENTER: TANYA ELLA CONLIN

Diversity and Cultural Competence is an ever-changing field of study, as such we can always learn more about how to be effective advocates for our peers facing all forms of oppression and discrimination. Those who are part of the dominant culture, language, religion, ethnicity, etc. of a society can use that societal position to advocate for change. There is so much potential for positive power in privilege. We cannot ignore it; we cannot give it back; but we can use it to create change. Being aware of our privilege will make us more effective peers. The greater our self-awareness and introspection, the more practical, pragmatic and useful our help will be. The stigma we have all experienced as peers can be the foundation of empathy that we build our greater understanding upon.

3:00 – 4:00

## **Parallel Realities: A Communal and Personal Journey**

PRESENTER: TYRONE GAMBLE

We will go down the rabbit hole and face psychosis/altered states/parallel realities in a different way. We will go beyond how these experiences are interpreted and made sense of. This workshop will show that community is essential to the healing and growth of those with parallel realities. However, this needs to be balanced with how people living with and experiencing parallel realities make sense of their experiences. We need communities that cultivate, reclaim, and support them. We need mentors and elders to develop roles in the community that are enriching, meaningful, and have real purpose. We will explore the new ways of supporting people experiencing parallel realities and discuss how these peers can transform the communities that really embrace and engage them. Those of us who live with these experiences have competencies, abilities, and gifts that enhance the community they are part of.

9:45 – 10:30

## Peer Support for Young Caregivers in Ontario: One Size Doesn't Fit All

PRESENTER: KATHLEEN SLEMON

The Ontario Caregiver Organization offers many ways for young caregivers to connect with each other, such as YoungCaregiversConnect.ca, a website and online community for young caregivers by young caregivers; a virtual support group; and our 1:1 Peer Support Program. This session will explore some of the challenges of providing peer support to a population that may not connect with the term "caregiver" and who may not be getting support in their caregiving role. Attendees will be invited to share their innovative program models, youth engagement strategies, and outreach tips, while also learning how to recognize and support young caregivers.

10:45 – 11:30

## Establishing an Older Adult Peer Support Program During the Pandemic

PRESENTER: TANYA QUESNEL

This session will feature three areas of peer support with older adults. These three areas include the undertaking of Participatory Action Research Project with older adults, a program evaluation, and the development of an older adult peer support training program. The purpose of this session will be to discuss these three elements and this presentation will be followed by a discussion to engage peers.

1:00 – 2:00

## Safer Use Peer Support Line - Peers as Responders in Opioid Overdose/Poising

PRESENTERS: AMY THOMPSON AND DYLAN DE LA RIVIÈRE

The Safer Use Peer Support Line is a spotting or observing phone service that supports a person while they use an unregulated substance. In the event of a poisoning, the SUPSL Peer Supporter is able to direct emergency services directly to the caller, reducing the risk of death. The toxic supply of substances, or 'opioid epidemic,' has claimed the lives of thousands of Canadians, despite being declared a national emergency five years ago. When Ontario moved into lockdown due to SARS-CoVid-19, it became immediately apparent that the risks to people who use drugs would increase. The Safer Use Peer Support Line is one means of reducing this danger. The How, Why and Multiverse of this program will be presented and discussed.

2:15 – 3:00

## Peer Support in the Emergency Department: An Innovative Way to Complement Care for Young Adults Presenting with Mental Health and Substance Use

PRESENTERS: YOLANDA-NICOLE DELMONTE, JORDYN ETHIER, BELLA SHULMAN AND CHRISTINE BRADSHAW

For many young people experiencing mental health or substance use concerns, emergency departments (EDs) are often a first point of contact when seeking health care. Responding to an increase in youth visiting EDs, Mount Sinai Hospital implemented the RBC Pathway to Peers (P2P) program, an innovative Peer Support program developed in partnership with Stella's Place. Our program offers rapid access to mental health services and leverages the expertise of trained peer support workers who have lived experience with mental health concerns and substance use.

3:15 – 3:45

## Annual General Meeting

Please join us for our Annual General Meeting where we will be presenting our Annual Report, honouring the hard work of Board members who are moving on and welcoming new Board members.

# ANNUAL LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS

Please join us on Tuesday, October 5th from 5:00pm to 7:00pm for our Annual Lighthouse Awards presentation to honour excellence in peer support. The evening will start with a keynote address performance by Victoria Maxwell and will be followed by the awards presentation.

# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

## **Tanya Shute**

Tanya Shute is assistant professor in the social program at Laurentian University, passionately researching and teaching in the areas of Mad and critical disability studies, and critical approaches to social work and social policy. Before her academic life, she worked in the Krasman Centres, consumer/survivor initiatives in Richmond Hill and Alliston.

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## **Laura Pearson**

Laura joins OPDI with twenty years of experience working in the Mental Health and Addiction System. Her work history includes providing direct service in shelters and supportive housing, serving as the Executive Director of a small community-based drop-in organization during a time of rapid transition as well as working with Older Adults and in out-patient hospital settings. Laura brings a deep understanding of and a passionate commitment to Peer Support work in Ontario.

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## **Kalysha Eccleston**

Kalysha Eccleston has a diploma in Social Service work and a Bachelor's Degree in forensic psychology. She is currently a Master's degree candidate in Higher Education at the University of Toronto (2021). Kalysha currently works as a Peer Support specialist for the Mental Health and Addictions Peer Support Program (MAPS) at Canadian Mental Health Association – Durham. The MAPS program supports individuals on probation and parole reintegrate into society through Peer Support, education, and community referrals. Kalysha hopes to continue to impact the social and personal wellbeing of her clients through her work at CMHA.

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## **Tanya Ella Conlin**

Tanya Ella Conlin is a Peer Support Specialist with Durham Mental Health Services at Lakeridge Health Corporation and a teacher in the Addiction and Mental Health Program at Durham College. She teaches Diversity-Informed Practice and Introduction to Counselling Practice. Tanya brings the philosophies of Peer Support not only into her community mental health work, but also into the classroom. Tanya is a WRAP facilitator, she develops and delivers many psychoeducational groups, provides one on one support and works in the Crisis Program. Tanya seeks to support individuals to believe in their strengths and their ability to build a better future for themselves.

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## **Tyrone Gamble**

Tyrone Gamble is a peer support worker and mental health and addictions advocate in Ottawa. He provides peer support in both the community and in several hospitals. Psychiatric Survivors of Ottawa is his community and source of support and guidance. His passion revolves around supporting people living with voices and/or parallel realities. Part of his interest and passion for hearing voices and parallel realities comes from his own lived experience and the expertise he has gained supporting others who share these and similar experiences.

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## **Kathleen Slemon, MA (she/her)**

Kathleen Slemon, MA (she/her) is the Program Lead, Peer Support and Young Caregiver Initiatives at the Ontario Caregiver Organization. Kathleen was a young caregiver during her undergraduate and master's degrees, both of which she received from the University of Guelph. She is passionate about leveraging lived experience to develop effective programs and supports.

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## **Tanya Quesnel**

Tanya Quesnel is the researcher for the Older Adult Peer Support program at Northern Initiative for Social Action (NISA) and is currently completing her Master of Social Work degree at Laurentian University in Sudbury, ON.

## **Amy Thompson**

Amy Thompson has been with the Krasman Centre for 17 years as the Warm Line and Peer Crisis Support Services Coordinator. Amy has also worked in street outreach and spent time doing Harm Reduction work in the Vancouver Lower East Side. Amy and her family have a micro farm where they grow garlic, currants and haskap berries. Amy has 2 kids 5 & 7 and a chocolate lab.

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## **Dylan de la Rivière**

Dylan de la Rivière is an Outreach Peer Supporter with The Krasman Centre. He has worked in downtown Toronto, North York, and now in York Region, focussing on harm reduction in mental health and substance use. He enjoys long bike rides and walking his dog.

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## **Yolanda-Nicole Delmonte (she/her)**

Yolanda Delmonte is a Peer Support Worker in the RBC Pathway to Peers Program. She has an undergraduate degree in Sociology & Criminology, as well as a Social Service Worker Diploma. Working from her own lived experience, she provides support to young people and promotes safety, empowerment, and connection.

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## **Jordyn Ethier (she/they)**

Jordyn Ethier is a part-time Peer Support Worker in the RBC Pathway to Peers Program. Jordyn is in her second year of the Community Worker program at George Brown College. Her biggest passions include mental health, LGBTQ+ rights, and anti-oppression.

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## **Bella Shulman (she/her)**

Bella Shulman is a part-time Peer Support Worker in the RBC Pathway to Peers Program. Bella is studying Sexual Diversity at the University of Toronto and is in her final year. She is passionate about equity, inclusivity, and anti-oppression frameworks.

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## **Christine Bradshaw (she/her)**

Christine Bradshaw is a Social Worker at Mount Sinai Hospital's Emergency Department and Manager of the RBC Pathway to Peers Program. Christine has been involved in the creation and implementation of the Pathway to Peers program and is motivated to make a difference in the lives of young adult patients.

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## **Victoria Maxwell, BFA / BPP\***

Victoria is an awarding-winning speaker on the lived experience of mental illness, recovery, wellness and creativity. She was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, anxiety and psychosis when she was 25, and has since become a self-proclaimed Wellness Warrior & Bipolar Princess! But for 5 years after her initial diagnoses, she refused to accept she had mental illness. In turn, she was in and out of the hospital. Finally, after acknowledging her conditions, with the help of her family, a good psychiatrist and others, she became proactive in her recovery. For the last 18 years she's presented her acclaimed theatrical keynotes and workshops at conferences and organizations around the world. She's worked as a mental health worker and has blogged for Psychology Today for over 10 years. Her acting credits include small roles opposite X-files' David Duchovny, John Travolta and Johnny Depp. As a core researcher with CREST.BD, a global team studying bipolar disorder, she's published papers and led research to improve the lives of those living with mental illness and their families. She's appeared on CNN, CTV national, in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Women's Health UK and others.

(\*Bachelor of Fine Arts / Bipolar Princess)

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## **David Reville**

A psychiatric survivor, David Reville has been working on mental health issues for over 50 years as a community activist, a City Councillor, an MPP, Advisor to the Premier and as chair of the Ontario Advocacy Commission. Between 1996 and 2015, David Reville and Associates provided consulting services to the mental health system and to consumer/survivor groups. For 11 years, David was an instructor in the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University; he is one of the pioneers of the new field of Mad Studies.



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