

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 19, 2020



asi-ica.ca
902-894-3399
info@asi.ica.ca

Mental Health Forum Addresses COVID-19 Impacts on Atlantic Youth

Keynote Open to the Public

Online Forum expected to attract a hundred Atlantic Canadians to discuss policies needed to promote youth mental health in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The public is welcome to view the keynote address, free of charge.

According to Trish Hennessy, Director of Think Upstream, a project of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a collective rather than individual approach to mental health can help build healthier and safer communities. Hennessy will be the keynote speaker for ASI 2020, the Atlantic Policy Forum on Mental Health Promotion, presented by the Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities, August 24-26. Her online keynote presentation, *From “me” to “we”: a collectivist vision for an upstream mental health approach*, will be open to the public during the opening ceremony at 6:30 pm on Monday, August 24th, and is sponsored by the City of Charlottetown.

Hennessy will advocate for using a “collectivist, societal point of view” to take on mental health. This point of view urges tackling the societal issues that can lead to mental health problems, such as “income inequality, precarious and low-paying work, lack of access to high quality, affordable early learning and education opportunities, and the stress of living with housing and food insecurity”. These societal factors are compounded for people who are racialized, gender diverse, or facing physical and emotional challenges. These issues, combined with the additional stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, are leading to new challenges for mental health in our communities. By taking a community-based and collective approach, Trish hopes that we can “move beyond the current discourse towards a vision for an upstream approach to mental health—moving from ‘me’ to ‘we’.”

This keynote presentation as well as the ASI 2020 opening ceremony is open to the public free of charge!

The Forum will bring together a wide variety of people passionate about mental health: educators, health professionals, social development workers, policy makers, Indigenous leaders and youth advocates. Developed around the theme, *‘Upstream Investment in Mental Health Promotion: The Answer to the Mental Health Crisis’*, ASI 2020 will feature presentations and panels from over 30 experts and community leaders, and discussions about concrete policy action to improve the health and safety of our communities. The online conferencing platform Whova will also allow for interactive group discussions and breaks with music and movement opportunities.

A presentation about policy and its role in transformative change will be explored using the Two-Eyed Seeing approach, featuring: Albert Marshall, Elder from the Moose Clan of the Mi'kmaw Nation, Eskasoni First Nation, Unama'ki- Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; Claire Betker, Scientific Director of the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health; and Brenda Restoule, CEO of the First People's Wellness Circle. Other Forum topics include: the impacts of politics and economics on policies and inclusion; evidence for upstream policies that promote the health of infants, children and youth; and policy and its power in promoting the mental health of Canadians.

The Forum will also feature skill development workshops, roundtables facilitated by A Way Home Canada, and a Youth Leadership Program. Several Francophone presenters will share their knowledge. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided, and program materials are available in English and French.

The public is encouraged to register for the online Forum August 24 – 26 to add their voices to this important and timely conversation. **The ASI 2020 program is available online at asi-ica.ca.**

ASI 2020 is made possible through contributions from: Medavie, Presenting Supporter; TD, sponsor of the Youth Leadership Program; Bell Let's Talk and the City of Charlottetown, Bronze



Sponsors; and a number of local and regional businesses. Generous support has been provided by the Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes. Organizing Partners include: the Mental Health Commission of Canada; A Way Home; the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation; the Atlantic provincial governments; and the Government of Canada.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PHOTOS & INTERVIEWS, CONTACT:

Patsy Beattie-Huggan, ASI Coordinator: info@asi-ica.ca / 902-894-3399

Julia Abundo, Communications and Fund Development Assistant: julia@asi-ica.ca