



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

## **MHCC's Youth Council help mark National Child and Youth Mental Health Day**

Several members of the MHCC's Youth Council are organizing and participating in local events throughout Canada to mark National Child and Youth Mental Health Day on May 7, 2013.

Don Mahleka is a co-founder of a radio show in Hamilton called Revolutionary Lives, which strives to reduce stigma and empower youth. Mahleka, who joined the Youth Council earlier this year, is helping to organize a youth mental health conference in Hamilton to mark National Child and Youth Mental Health Day. This youth-led, day-long conference will feature speakers on youth mental health transition programs, access to care for immigrant youth in crisis and individual workshops on youth peer support led by Marta Sadkowski, another member of MHCC's Youth Council.

"When there's youth voice and participation you have an opportunity for lasting impact," Mahleka says. "Having youth from various cultural backgrounds coming together to share information about youth mental health promotion, mental illness prevention, and recovery is very important. Youth are more than capable of helping to create change and instill hope when our unique voices are heard."

Every year during the Canadian Mental Health Association's Mental Health Week (May 6-12, 2013), the Institute of Families for Child and Youth Mental Health holds a day-long, themed campaign to mark current research, programs and practices in child and youth mental health. This year, the "I Care About You" campaign aims to "connect kids to parents and caring adults to let them know that their mental health is important to us, and that we are there for them as adults."

Youth Council Chair Kristen Zaun, a member since 2011, has experience volunteering at various local mental health organizations in the Halifax area. She will mark Child and Youth Mental Health Day by volunteering with an organization in Halifax called Family SOS, leading a group session about mental health to children ages 5-12 in a program called Healthy Kidz.

Other Youth Council members showed their support by writing blogs and newspaper submissions about what child and youth mental health means to them. Arthur Gallant, a member since 2013, has prepared a guest blog for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's website about the need for more youth leadership within the mental health system. Simran Lehal will be working with a mental health program in Yellowknife, making presentations at area schools targeted at reducing the stigma of mental illness.

Being well connected to various social media, Youth Council members will tweet sections of the [Evergreen Framework](#), the MHCC's framework for improving youth mental health care in Canada, on May 7<sup>th</sup> using their own hashtag #MHCCyouthcouncil. Others connected with local parent and school advisory groups will help distribute materials from the green ribbon campaign.



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In 2008, the Mental Health Commission of Canada created the Youth Council comprised of youth between the ages of 18 and 30 who have lived experience with mental health problems or illnesses, either personally or through a family member or friend. The Youth Council advises the MHCC on matters unique to youth, and helps guide its future direction by adding the youth perspective throughout much of the Commission's work.

#### **ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA**

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a catalyst for change. We are collaborating with hundreds of partners to change the attitudes of Canadians toward mental health problems and to improve services and support. Our goal is to help people who live with mental health problems and illnesses lead meaningful and productive lives. Together we spark change.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada is funded by Health Canada.

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*The views represented herein solely represent the views of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.  
Production of this document is made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada.*