At Home/Chez Soi Celebrates A Year of Milestones

Since its official five-city launch one year ago, the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s (MHCC) national research project on mental health and homelessness has much to celebrate.

The five sites of the At Home/Chez Soi project — Moncton, Montréal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver — are investigating the best ways to help homeless people living with a mental illness. Over the past 12 months there have been many positive signs.

Site coordinators report stories of participants settling into their new homes and pursuing job opportunities. Others notice a renewed stability within participants’ lives, some of whom are forming fresh relationships and making use of new support systems.

The project’s host cities have been holding their own informal anniversary events to provide public updates and to celebrate successes with the many partners central to the project’s operation.

Over the next three years, 2,285 people who are homeless and living with a mental illness will take part in the project. Of those, 1,325 will receive new homes and support. The remaining participants will receive the services and supports already available in their communities.

More than 600 homeless participants are now housed thanks to the project.

At Home/Chez Soi participant update as of January 7, 2011:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moncton</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of participants: 1,678

For more information about the At Home/Chez Soi initiative, click here.
Provinces of Ontario and BC
Making Mental Health a Priority

The MHCC applauds two recent major developments in provincial mental health.

This past November, the Government of British Columbia released Healthy Minds, Healthy People: A 10-year Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance Abuse in B.C. The plan provides a framework for improving the mental health and well-being of the population. It also looks at the quality and accessibility of services for people with mental health and substance use problems, with a focus on prevention of problems, early intervention, treatment and sustainability.

In Ontario this past December, the Minister’s Advisory Group released Respect, Recovery, Resilience: Recommendations for Ontario’s Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. The recommendations from this report, as well as from the Select Committee Report on Mental Health and Addictions that was released in August, will inform the 10-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy that is under development.

These provincial developments contribute to the growing momentum for a new approach to mental health across Canada, and will inform the MHCC’s work to develop a mental health strategy for Canada.

Early Anti-Stigma Results Show Attitude Shifts In Ontario

The MHCC’s Opening Minds encourages adoption of promising programs across Canada.

In 2010, the MHCC’s anti-stigma initiative Opening Minds partnered with Ontario’s Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to evaluate its anti-stigma program for healthcare practitioners. Understanding the Impact of Stigma is a program that delivers workshops aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness sometimes perpetuated by healthcare providers.

Constantin Nastic, a full-time Peer Support Facilitator for the Streamlined Access Team at the York Support Services Network, speaks to workshop participants about his mental illness as well as the stigma and discrimination he experienced from frontline healthcare workers. This method of telling a personal story, also known as contact-based education, is one method that has been shown internationally to reduce stigma.

As part of the evaluation, Opening Minds tested the perceptions of the healthcare practitioners, both before a workshop and afterwards. Following the workshop, there was a 25 per cent increase among participants who agreed employers should hire people with a mental illness. There was also an increase of 40 per cent in those who said they would be willing to admit to colleagues that they had a mental illness. Additionally, 35 per cent more participants believed that it is their responsibility to encourage recovery in people with a mental illness.

Because the Central LHIN program has proven to be effective at reducing stigma, Opening Minds is now helping to replicate it in other regions across the country. For example, the Interior Health Authority in British Columbia has adapted the Ontario Central LHIN program in seven hospitals and community clinics throughout the province.
Saskatchewan Police Commission Sets an Example

*Ground-breaking policy protects privacy of those living with mental illness.*

Saskatchewan police leaders, in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Police Commission, have raised the bar for mental health and policing throughout Canada. In 2009, a provincial policy was adopted which recognized “orders or other records relating to The Mental Health Services Act or The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act will not be disclosed” during a criminal occurrence security check. All police in Saskatchewan, including members of the RCMP, adhere to the policy. The policy makes a significant difference with regard to protecting the privacy of those with mental illness.

The Saskatchewan Chiefs of Police drove this initiative with the help of Terry Coleman, a member of the MHCC’s Mental Health and the Law Advisory Committee. Coleman was instrumental in seeing this policy adopted while he was a Chief of Police in Saskatchewan. The policy is supported by the MHCC as a best practice and it encourages other jurisdictions to adopt it as well.

Canada Post Foundation Supports Mental Health First Aid Training

*Grant will help train almost 300 adults to assist people with mental health problems.*

A grant from The Canada Post Foundation to Algoma Family Services in Algoma, Ontario will allow the region to offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Canada Training for the first time in the area. Algoma Family Services is a provider of specialized services for children, youth, adults, and families in the Algoma District in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

During the first year of this project, approximately 288 local adults will be MHFA trained and an estimated 1,152 children and youth affected by mental illness will receive support from an MHFA trained adult.

The MHFA Algoma Project will build community-based support for children and youth throughout the Algoma District who are affected by mental illness. All communities within the large rural District of Algoma, Ontario including the cities of Sault Ste. Marie and Elliot Lake; the towns of Blind River, Bruce Mines, Spanish, and Thessalon; the municipality of Huron Shores; the village of Hilton Beach; 14 townships; and eight First Nation communities across the District will be involved in the project.

MHFA is a program of the MHCC. MHFA Instructor Training courses are being offered in Calgary from February 13-18th, 2011. For a complete list of training courses across Canada and to learn more about Mental Health First Aid click here.
MHCC President and CEO Responds to Statistics Canada Report

In a recent Statistics Canada report that was featured in newspapers across Canada, cancer and heart disease were listed as the leading causes of death in the country. Suicide was listed as the second leading cause of death for young adults.

MHCC President and CEO Louise Bradley responded to the report and her letter was featured in a number of papers including The National Post, The Brandon Sun, The Edmonton Sun, The Windsor Star, The Province (Vancouver), The Leader-Post (Regina) and the Times Colonist (Victoria).

Dear Editor,

Every Canadian should be very concerned about the Statistics Canada’s report this week that suicide is the second leading cause of death for young adults in this country and one of the top 10 leading causes of death overall.

What your news story did not mention is that behind these two important statistics, there were people suffering from forms of mental illness that led them to suicide. They are people like 18-year-old Jack Windeler, a first-year student at Queen’s University whose suicide last March has sparked a national campaign – The Jack Project (www.thejackproject.org) – to focus attention on youth mental health.

This year alone, more than seven million Canadians will experience a mental illness. They could be your son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother, friend or colleague. Stigma and discrimination are still major barriers preventing people living with a mental illness from talking about it and receiving treatment. The Mental Health Commission of Canada’s anti-stigma initiative, Opening Minds, is seeking out the most effective ways to change negative attitudes and behaviours toward people experiencing mental illness. A part of this work is to find the best strategies to sensitize children and youth about mental illness, the importance of talking about it and seeking early treatment.

Every Canadian can make a significant difference by taking action to eliminate stigma and discrimination and talking openly about mental health issues with their colleagues, family and friends. By doing so, they will be helping to give all Canadians living with mental illness real hope for treatment and recovery.

Louise Bradley
President & CEO
Mental Health Commission of Canada
Pressures Mount in Workplace Mental Health

$3 billion to $11 billion could be saved annually by preventing mental injuries in the workplace.

Workplace mental health issues recently came into the spotlight when the MHCC released the report *Tracking the Perfect Legal Storm*. The document reveals that employers face an emerging legal duty to provide both a psychologically and physically safe workplace.

The report was prepared for the MHCC’s Workforce Advisory Committee by Martin Shain, PhD, from the University of Toronto. The findings caught the attention of various publications across Canada including Canadian Safety Reporter, HR reporter, Safe Supervisor and The Law Times.

*Tracking The Perfect Legal Storm* is a follow-up to Shain’s 2009 *Stress at Work* report in which Shain first outlined significant shifts in Canadian law regarding psychological safety in the workplace. In both reports, Shain explains how Canadian courts and tribunals are becoming increasingly intolerant of workplace factors that threaten psychological safety. Some organizations have been ordered to change damaging workplace practices or risk facing significant financial punishment.

According to Shain, pressures experienced in modern workplaces can lead to common mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and burnout, which can be characterized as mental injury. Courts and tribunals are scrutinizing behavior that may cause mental injury to employees. Legal action is being taken in seven key areas of law including human rights tribunals and occupational health and safety law. These factors are converging to form what Shain calls a perfect legal storm.

Overall, Shain estimates that between $3 to $11 billion could be saved annually in Canada if mental injuries caused by employers were prevented.

In light of the report findings, the MHCC is facilitating discussions with employers, legal experts, union leaders, and workplace health and safety experts to discuss how to provide and maintain a psychologically safe workplace.

To learn more, click here.

MHCC Tackles Stigma in the Workforce

Opening Minds, the MHCC’s anti-stigma initiative is partnering with a number of major corporations and government departments to evaluate their workplace anti-stigma programs.

The first program being evaluated is called “What’s up with Biff?”, a stand-alone workshop about mental health in the workplace created by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Calgary Region. Corporate partners providing pilot sites for the workshop include Canadian Pacific Railway and McElhanney Land Surveys Ltd. The evaluations will be led by principal investigator Keith Dobson, PhD, Head, Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary.

Additionally, Opening Minds is working with organizations that already have anti-stigma programs in place to evaluate them and identify leading anti-stigma practices in workplace settings. One such organization is TELUS, which is piloting its mental health promotion program in two Ontario locations. Principal investigators Bonnie Kirsh, PhD, University of Toronto and Terry Krupa, PhD, Queen’s University, are working with TELUS to identify and evaluate the anti-stigma components within the program.

The MHCC recognizes the leadership of these organizations to take on mental health in their workplace settings. Their commitment is a significant one. It includes an assessment of the organization’s current policies and processes for supporting the mental health of employees and addressing stigma associated with mental illness in the workplace. Strengths and weaknesses are identified from the perspectives of both the organization’s leadership and employees and areas for improvement are identified.

To learn more about Opening Minds and the programs selected click here.
Planning a Mental Health Strategy for Canada

With the release of Toward Recovery and Well-Being: A Framework for a Mental Health Strategy for Canada in December 2009, the MHCC set out a vision and seven broad goals for mental health system transformation.

Work is now underway to develop a mental health strategy for Canada that will translate the vision and goals of the Commission’s framework into priorities for action. Eight strategic directions have been identified. The first five set out an agenda for transformation, while the remaining three focus on building capacity to enable transformation. Over the course of 2011, a small number of priorities for action will be determined for each of these strategic directions.

Five strategic directions to transform the mental health system:
1. Increasing the opportunity for all people living in Canada to enjoy the best possible mental health;
2. Actively engaging people living with mental health problems and illnesses and their families in decision-making at all levels;
3. Improving pathways to recovery and well-being;
4. Building welcoming communities and supportive environments; and
5. Seeking innovation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis to advance mental health.

Three strategic directions to enable transformation:
1. Funding transformation;
2. Building infrastructure; and
3. Mobilizing leadership.

Join the Conversation for Bell Let’s Talk Day

The MHCC is proud to support Bell for their first annual Let’s Talk Day. On February 9, 2011, Canadians are encouraged to break the silence by texting or taking a picture of their smile and posting it online. Let’s Talk Day will focus national attention on issues which are at the heart of the MHCC’s work, including stigma, community care and access, research, and mental health in the workplace. Bell Canada recently announced a $50-million investment over five years to support mental health research and services across Canada. It’s the largest charitable investment by a Canadian corporation in support of mental health. In addition, Bell will contribute 5¢ for every long distance call and text message its customers make on Let’s Talk Day to further fund and support mental health related programs across the country. The MHCC is encouraged by this unprecedented show of support and hopes that people will feel confident to talk about mental health issues every day of the year.

For more information – and to join Bell Let’s Talk Day please click here.
MHCC Sponsors World Conference on Mental Health

MHCC representatives attended the 6th World Conference on the Promotion of Mental Health and Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders in Washington D.C. last November. While in America’s capital, MHCC representatives were given the opportunity to share some of the work on the mental health strategy for Canada, workplace mental health, and the At Home/Chez Soi initiative on mental health and homelessness.

The MHCC’s President and CEO Louise Bradley opened the conference and MHCC Chair Michael Kirby participated in the plenary session entitled Influencing Policy and the Role of Advocacy.

While in the capital, the MHCC hosted the Mental Health Leaders Reception at the Canadian Embassy with Ambassador Gary Doer as the evening’s special guest.

**MHCC on CBC’s The Current: Mental Health Special**

As part of its “Live Right Now” campaign to promote physical and mental health, CBC Radio’s The Current broadcasted two special shows on mental health in January. They were both hosted by Steven Page, who is the former lead singer of the Barenaked Ladies and has a history of depression.

The first mental health special featured an interview with Dr. Simon Davidson, Chair of the MHCC’s Child and Youth Advisory Committee. A number of important issues were raised relating to child and youth mental health including the impact of stigma, early intervention and prevention, and lack of services. Dr. Davidson also talked about the Advisory Committee’s Evergreen Framework and the development of the MHCC’s Knowledge Exchange Centre.

In response to the positive feedback received, The Current held a live phone-in session on: ‘What it’s like to be mentally ill in Canada today.’ MHCC Vice-Chair, Dr. David Goldbloom, was invited to join Steven Page and CBC host Anna Maria Tremonti on the panel to take calls about personal stories of living and coping with mental health issues. All three were on air for more than five hours and fielded calls live from every time zone, resulting in five different shows.

To listen to Dr. Simon Davidson’s interview and the rest of the show, [click here](#).

To listen to Dr. David Goldbloom’s interview and the rest of the show, [click here](#).

For pictures, [click here](#).
The Canadian Medical Association Wants Your Opinion

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) which represents 74,000 doctors from across the country, believes it is time for transformational change to our healthcare system.

The organization’s policy document Healthcare Transformation in Canada: Change that Works. Care That Lasts, has helped create a blueprint of what it thinks these changes should entail, including putting patients first and ensuring Canadians are getting good value for their money.

The CMA is holding a national dialogue on healthcare to hear what you have to say about its plan. It will be using the input to help move the public policy agenda forward based on what Canadians want the healthcare system to look like.

To share your opinion, click here

Spotlight on Mental Health Stigma in BC Emergency Rooms

After years of working in hospital emergency rooms in BC, Cheryl Whittleton recognized that before people with mental illness could receive better care, the stigma in ERs needed to be reduced. With the help of an Ontario anti-stigma program, and a courageous BC artist, she decided to do something about it.

Click here to read the full article

We Want to Hear From You!

Complete an online survey for a chance to win a $100 Amazon gift card.

At the MHCC, we’ve been working diligently since 2007 to contribute to an integrated mental health system in Canada that responds to the needs of its consumers. With this in mind, we’ve asked an independent firm to evaluate the MHCC’s early results and outputs. Specifically, we are evaluating progress in our key strategic areas, our programs’ effectiveness, our work’s impact, and other ways we have made, or could make, a difference.

To do this, we need your help. Please click the link below to complete the anonymous 15-30 minute online survey. Not only would you be helping us evaluate our work, you could also win a $100 gift card from Amazon.ca.

Online Survey Here

BC Artist Niki Hylins at the Penticton Art Gallery where she and her students showcased a series of self-portraits this fall. Photo Credit: Colin Scott