

A St. Mary's-McGill Café Scientifique

Rendezvous Art & Science – Mental Health in the Community
May 3, 2017 – 5 :00-7:30pm – Maison de la Culture, Montreal

Final Report

Overview

On May 3rd, 2017, St. Mary's Research Centre hosted their second St. Mary's-McGill Café Scientifique as part of Canada's Mental Health Week. The aim was to bring together innovative work from art and science to raise awareness of the issues faced by people living with mental illness in the community. This meeting was organized by Dr. Susan Law at St. Mary's Research Centre and McGill University, and held at the Maison de la Culture in heart of Montreal's Côte-des-neiges community. Presentations featured mental health scientist Rob Whitley from the Douglas Research Institute, dancers Jane Mappin and Daniel Firth, psychologist and film-maker Joel Montanez, and peer support worker Frances Skerritt; CBC journalist Loreen Pindera moderated the event. See event program attached.

In addition to this report and links to the presentations, a short film about the event has been produced by Christopher Wynn, and is available at: <https://vimeo.com/223783635>. The event attracted 79 people, 69 of whom were community members outside of St Mary's. From the 37 completed evaluations, we know that the audience was primarily comprised of people who were: middle-aged, women, and relatively well educated, and included a mix of citizens, researchers, students, and healthcare professionals. About 80% of participants rated the event as 'excellent' and there were several ideas for topics at future cafés. Financial support for this event was provided by the St. Mary's Hospital Foundation.

Prepared by:

Susan Law, Akina Fay and Kim Tardif
St. Mary's Research Centre
12 June 2017



Summary of the event

Introduction:

May 1-7, 2017 marked the 66th annual Canadian Mental Health Association's Mental Health Week. To mark this national event, St Mary's and McGill organized a Café Scientifique focused on community mental health. The goal of this event was to raise community awareness of innovative and promising research, the voices of people living with mental health problems, emerging fields in health care, and arts-based interpretations of mental health challenges. Indeed, the team of presenters included a researcher from the Douglas Hospital, a psychologist and social cinematographer, dancers, and a peer support specialist. The evening started off with scientific research involving film-based approaches, followed by a dance interpretation of mental illness, and ended with the personal experiences of a peer support worker. Questions and answers were invited throughout, and the evening finished with an engaging question and answer period between the panel of presenters and the audience.

In total, 79 people attended the Café Scientifique. This included 10 presenters and organizers, and 69 community members.

The evening was moderated by Loreen Pindera, chief editor and reporter for CBC Radio News. Before she took the stage, St. Mary's Research Centre Scientific Director Dr. Jeannie Haggerty offered a warm bilingual welcome. She was then joined by event organizer and St Mary's Principal Scientist Dr. Susan Law to thank their presenters and the audience for attending the event in such large numbers. Loreen Pindera then kicked off the evening.

Presentations:

The first presenter to present was Dr. Rob Whitley, Principal Investigator at the Douglas Hospital Research Centre. His research focuses mainly on themes of recovery and stigma. The project he presented was called: *Using Participatory Video to Promote Recovery and Reduce Stigma of Mental Illness*. Participatory video is a group activity with a pre-existing marginalized group. The marginalized group works from the bottom-up to tell their stories through videos, with the help of an experienced videographer and state-of-the-art equipment. This approach uses the relatively new 'visual culture' to reach thousands of people.

The current project, *Stopping the Stigma*, is a multi-city participatory video initiative. Since its start in 2014, 15 videos have been made by the participants and 11 screenings have taken place that typically involve a discussion panel following the screening with the participants and scientists. By 2018, the goal is to have completed 40 screenings as these are very important for teaching students, health care providers, and the public regarding the realities of stigma and marginalization. Dr Whitley presented a 5-minute video made by the Toronto group, entitled *Flak*. The video is a compilation of interviews with the participants, an emotional tale that indicates to the viewer that the worst part of mental illness is often the stigma, not the symptoms.

The future of the participatory video initiative includes more screenings, evaluation of the approach in terms of impact on the participants and the audience, in addition to the development of academic papers, and the creation of more projects. When asked if the projects would be disseminated to film directors and festivals, Robbie, a director for the projects in the audience, said that the web actually reaches a much wider audience. Dr Whitley indicated that the projects belong to the participants, and ultimately the decision would be up to them. He did note, however, that the project would be less intimate if there was no panel discussion. To view the videos created until now, visit www.youtube.com/user/recoverymentalhealth.

Loreen Pindera came back to the stage to thank Dr Whitley for his presentation and to introduce the next presenter, Dr. Joel Montañez who is a health psychologist, a humanitarian worker, and a social cinematographer. In conjunction with the St. Mary's Canadian health experiences initiative and with funding from Bell Canada, he created a short film about immigrant mental health, based on interviews with immigrants and the professionals that work with and for them. He thanked Dr. Susan Law and Ms. Ilja Ormel for their contributions to the project.

Dr. Montañez introduced the film entitled *Immigrant Mental Health*, describing it as a sad film about the experiences of Canadian immigrants and migrants, separated in parts 1 and 2, respectively. The themes for part 1 include triggers, family, finding a job, getting help, empathy, medication, despair, state of mind, self-harm and healing. Some patients have chosen to be anonymous, some show their faces, and others give their full name. The plan is to disseminate these films to decision makers to have an impact on policy and practice related to caring for this group. Raising awareness more generally is a secondary end point. The film was shown and had a strong impact on the audience, setting the tone for the next presenters.

After the viewing, Loreen Pindera came back to the stage to introduce the next presenters, Jane Mappin and Daniel Firth. Together, they would interpret a dance called Lewis and Lucie. Jane Mappin is a dance choreographer, interpreter and teacher. She choreographed the piece in 2013 with Daniel Firth as her interpreter; Daniel is known for the emotion he brings to his dancing.

The performance of Lewis and Lucie touches upon marginality, solitude and past damages. A sense of loneliness and anxiety prevails for the first half of the dance, with Lewis alone on a park bench appearing distressed. Lucie then comes along and they develop a camaraderie that almost becomes a true friendship. The reading of a poem is heard over the music while both dancers perform. The performance was emotional, raw and extremely relevant to the evening. When they had finished performing, Ms. Pindera came onto the stage and uttered 'Wow!'. This seemed to be exactly what everyone else in the room was thinking.

The audience had a few questions for the dancers. When asked if the book used in the choreography symbolized anything, Jane Mappin answered that she hadn't been asked that before, but to her it was a communication tool, and she encouraged the audience to interpret it as they liked. When asked how long it took to choreograph, she responded that it had taken a

few months, but was constantly evolving. She also told the audience that the first 4 minutes when Daniel Firth is alone onstage are improvised. The audience was very surprised to hear this, and Mr. Firth was asked if he did the same thing every time. He responded that he typically takes his inspiration from the mood of the evening: having just seen Dr. Montanez's sad film, his dancing had more sadness to it tonight.

The final presenter for the evening was Frances Skerritt, a peer support specialist. She explained her role as an individual with lived experiences who is helping others, supporting them and listening. It is a relatively new role in the health care system, and Mrs. Skerritt is the only one she is aware of for now. She started her role 10 years ago, and has been redefining its borders ever since. She talked about the stigma she faced upon joining the team at the Wellington Centre, working to alter the stigma she felt as well as everyone else's – in an effort to change the field over time.

Mrs. Skerritt uses a needs-based approach to shape her role. She has tried to educate professionals with her lived experiences. She explained how, having gone through the system, you see it from different angles and can understand certain things from a different perspective. She believes that by working together, we can change stigma. Like Dr. Montañez, her goal is to change policy with her work. When asked why she is the only peer specialist, Mrs. Skerritt replied honestly, saying it was most likely a budget allocation problem. She argued that people cannot wait for the budget to be available, rather they need to make peer specialists a priority if we want to see more of them in practice.

Question and Answer Session with Panel:

Loreen Pindera then convened the panel of presenters on stage for a question and answer session with the audience. Key points from this session are presented below (see **Attachment 1** for details):

- Education of the public is achieved when you create material to make them feel things.
- Efforts to reduce stigma do not need to be expensive; it all starts with addressing it in the media. Educating journalists has been very effective in reducing stigma over the last 10 years.
- One of the best ways to change policy is to include people with lived experiences. We must listen to them, teach them how to express themselves and build from their experiences.
- Getting funding for mental health initiatives is difficult because the subject is not always 'fun'. However, honesty is key in evoking emotion and implementing change.
- Although having peer specialists is essential in the healthcare setting, it is important to have a good balance of peers and healthcare professionals. There must be space to work to grow and work together.
- Spirituality, religion and family are extremely important to overcome social isolation.

Evaluation:

Below is a descriptive summary of the 37 evaluations received (see **Attachment 2** for details):

- The event was attended by a large proportion of females (78%), mostly middle-aged and highly educated (55% of attendees had a graduate degree).
- 33 of 34 people who rated the event evaluated it as 'good' or 'excellent'.
- One person rated the event as 'average', while indicating she would attend another Café Scientifique.
- 36 of 37 attendees would attend another Café Scientifique. The one person who would not attend again rated the event as 'excellent'.
- Highlights of the evening for attendees included: the peer specialist, the dance and the participatory video screening.
- Suggested improvements included better audiovisual control, better time management, more French and more time for video screenings.
- Additional topics that attendees would like to explore included many subjects from ageing to nutrition to palliative care and sports medicine.

Conclusion:

Overall, the Café Scientifique was considered a success from the perspectives of participants and project team. We were able to bring perspectives from art and science on mental health in the community, and stimulate reflection and discussion about the problems, solutions, and unanswered questions. The speakers made their subjects accessible and easy to comprehend. The scientific parts of the evening made the audience think, whereas the art segments made the audience feel.

Acknowledgements:

This event was made possible with the generous financial support from the St. Mary's Hospital Foundation, administrative support from St. Mary's Research Centre – particularly Kim Tardif, KT Specialist, Isabelle Crépeau, Administrative Assistant, and Wim Wolfs, Manager. With special thanks to the presenters – Rob Whitley, Jane Mappin and Daniel Firth, Joel Montanez, and Frances Skeritt – and our videographer, Christopher Wynn. Thanks to McGill medical student Akina Fay for general coordination and writing support.

Attachments:

1. Summary of Q & A session
2. Evaluation summary
3. Program and presenter biographies

Panel: questions and answers

1. What are the needs of immigrants and what can we do to help?

JM: There is work to be done on many levels. To implement change, we must create feeling more than cognition. The real way to learn is to feel, and by putting out educational, honest material to make people feel, we can start making changes.

2. With the lack of monetary resources in the health care system, what is your best hope for ideas to implement change?

RW: Not much money is needed to reduce stigma. Sadly, the number one source of stigma comes from the media. A 10-year study showed that a great deal of improvement in media stigma can be made with education alone. This does not cost much money. Participatory videos can also be screened in to students, workers and employers for no cost.

FS: One way to change policy is by including people with lived experiences in policy making and meetings. We must listen to their opinions, experiences and perspectives. We must also teach those with lived experiences how to participate and share their opinion without fear of stigma.

JM: Educating the youth early is key.

3. When companies like Bell Canada fund projects, do they want anything in exchange? How do you deal with funding from a private company?

JM: It is definitely a challenge as a researcher because application take a lot of work. It is very difficult to get mental health research funded. Bell Canada tries to make mental health fun and approachable. However, doing this is difficult. The film we made was a project aimed at truth. The truth was sad so the film is sad.

4. Opinion: In New York, there was a project to create community psychiatry and release mentally ill people from institutions. It ended up being a disaster because politicians kept all the money in institutions, not the community. I think it would be best to fire professionals and politicians and hire peers. We can then let the peers hire professionals and politicians. This is my hope.

FS: Having peers only would not be so useful either. Everyone goes through something and will need a clinical worker. We should open space to grow and all work together. It shouldn't be either or.

5. It seems like there is a common theme here tonight: social isolation and the need for human connection. Where do we go from here?

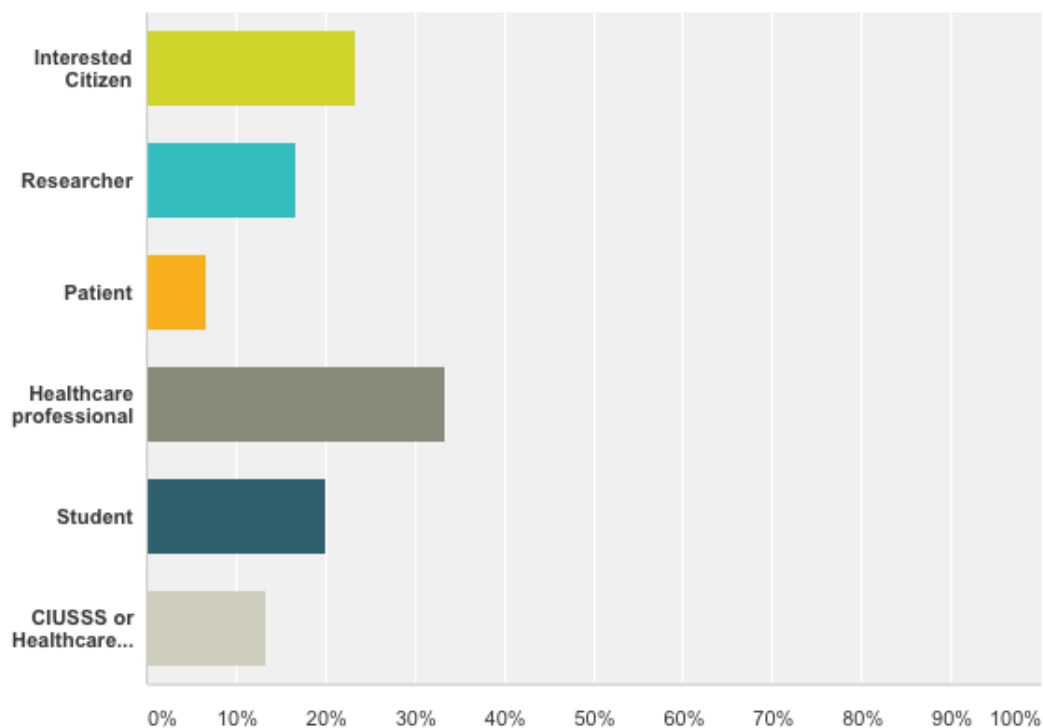
RW: It has been shown that there is no link between the number of professionals and recovery. We need to consider the importance of spirituality, religion and family. Social inclusion is key to recovery from mental illness.

JM: For immigrants, it is all about family reunification.

Evaluations: summary

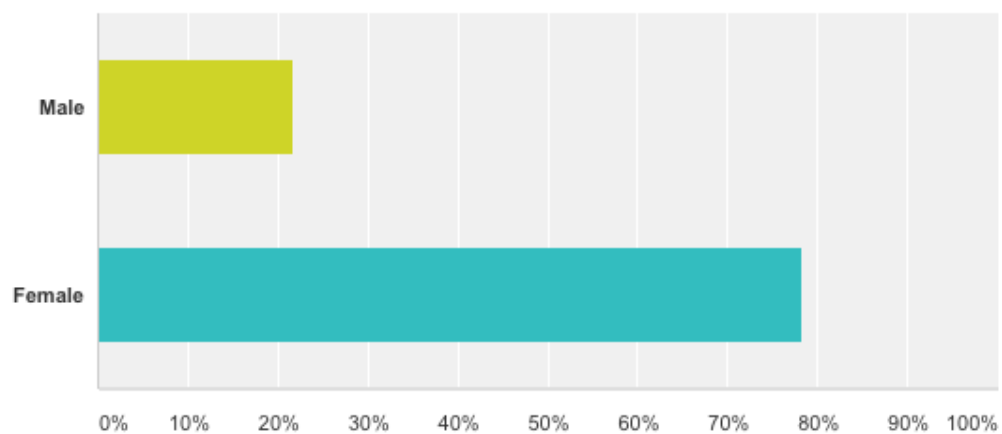
Which of the following best describes you?

Answered: 30 Skipped: 7



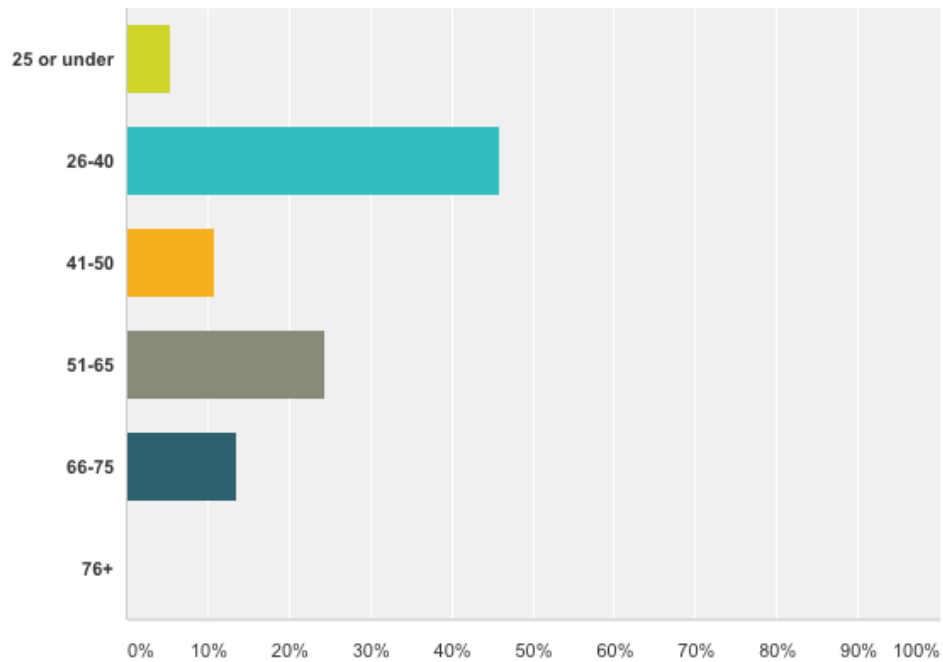
Gender

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



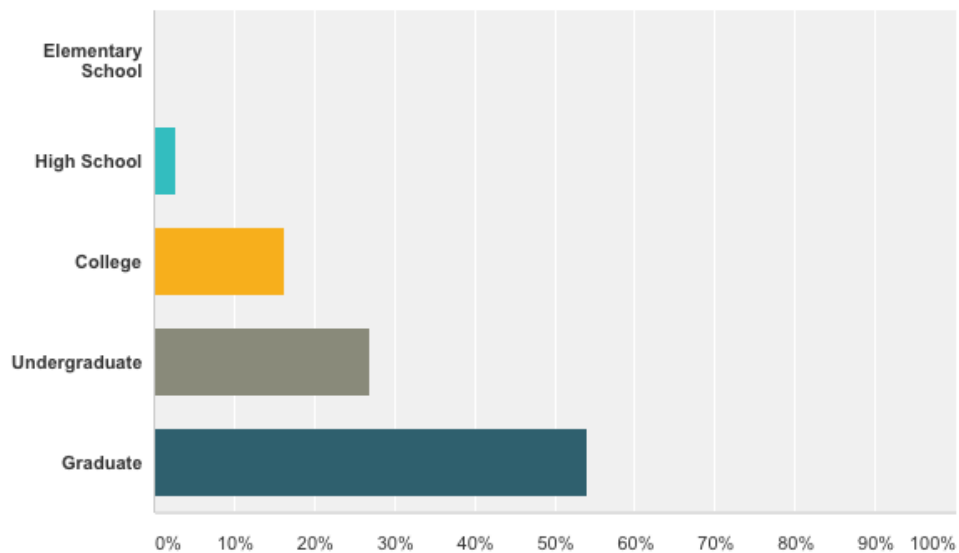
Age group

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



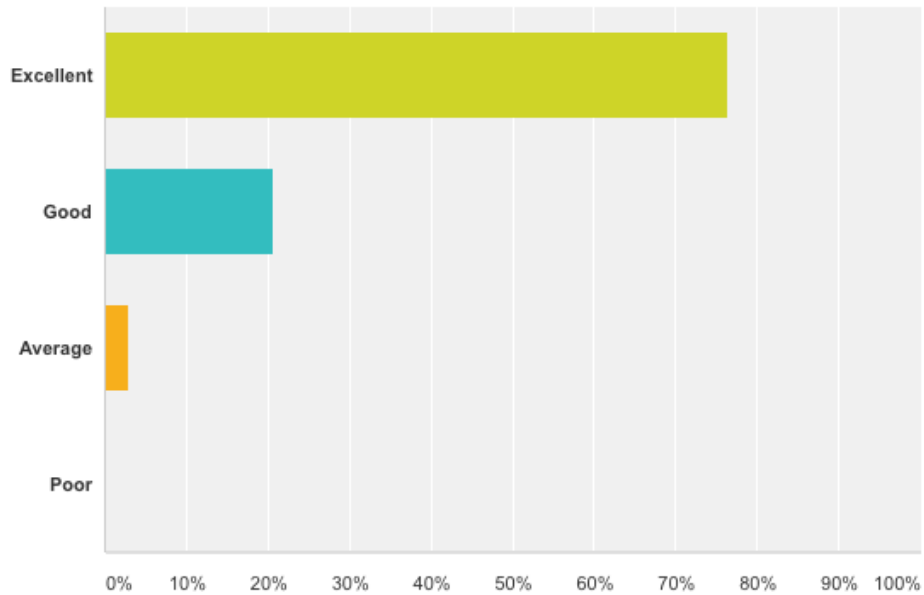
What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 0



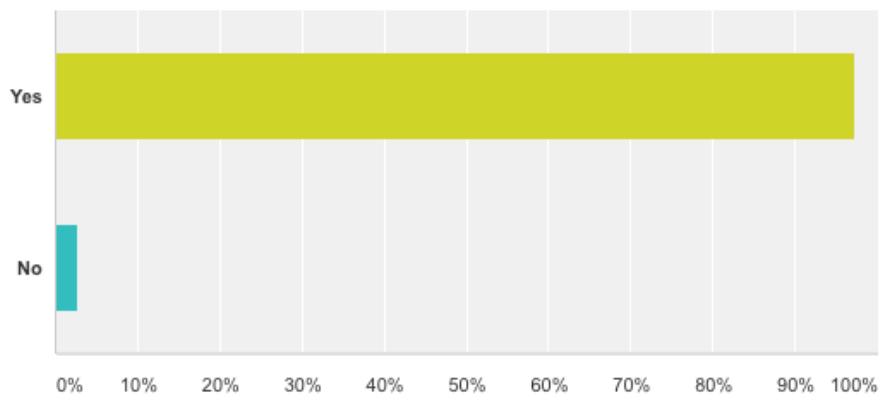
Rate your overall impression of the event

Answered: 34 Skipped: 3



Would you come to another Café Scientifique?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 1



What was your favourite part of the evening?

Peer specialist x5

Venue x1

Dance expressed how it feels inside to have a mental illness

Multidisciplinary approach

Immigrant issues x2

The dance was artistic and emotional x7

Overcoming stigma x2

Rob Whitley's participatory video and concept x4
Local initiatives
Different voices were heard and given the same importance x2

What could have been better in this event?
Too academic – get rid of powerpoints
Audiovisual and technical issues x3
More time for videos x2
Bring in individuals with mental illness to talk x3
Have more!
The event was not bilingual as promised x3
Time management x2
Give presenters clickers so they can change their own slides
Less time naming people
More time for questions
Peer specialist a little bit earlier in the evening

What other topics would you have liked to hear about?
Addiction treatment
Communication between doctors and patients
Aging: online help, events in the community
Everything!
Treatments: private and new options
Language services for immigrants
Post-traumatic stress disorder and healing x2
Substance abuse and recovery in the medical system
Equity and healthcare
Geriatric health x3
Reproductive health
Dance and art in healthcare
How students can get involved
Sports medicine
Nutrition
Intellectual disabilities
Resources and help lines
Youth and mental health
Palliative care

Additional comments
Bravo!
Informative, true, raw.
Inspiring, wonderful.

Looking forward to the next one.
Wonderful to see the community interact over difficult, salient, important subjects.
Great group discussion
Thank you
I would love to be given resources for mental health patients and families and how to sign up
I think it would be great to include patients
Very interesting, great animation, high class.
Merçi
Terrific presentation
I loved the English
Thank you for the food.
Job well done
Interested in science/art work
Really enjoyed this. Great job and I'm glad CIUSSS reached out for the invite.
Too much text, too many complainers.
You should do conferences in other neighbourhoods of Montreal
Fantastic event, well done!

Program

RENDEZVOUS ART & SCIENCE: MENTAL HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY

PROGRAM

5:00pm	Refreshments
5:30pm	Welcome (Jeannie Haggerty, Susan Law and Loreen Pindera)
5:40pm	Using participatory video to catalyze change (Rob Whitley)
6:00pm	Short film: Immigrant mental health (Joel Montanez)
6:20pm	Dance performance: 'Lewis & Lucie' (Jane Mappin and Daniel Firth)
6:40pm	Reflections from a peer support worker (Frances Skerritt)
7:00pm	Discussion
7:30pm	Close

SPECIAL THANKS



FONDATION DE
L'HÔPITAL
ST. MARY

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HOSPITAL
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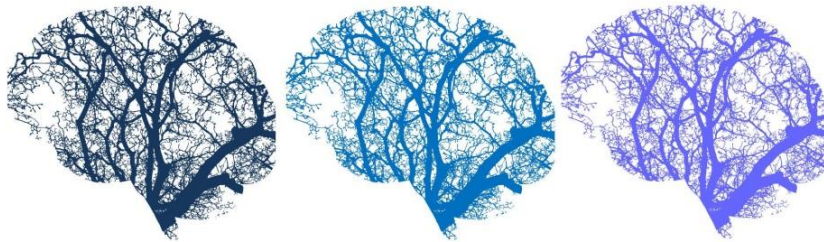
Department of
Family Medicine

*Centre intégré
universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
de l'Ouest-de-
l'Île-de-Montréal*

Québec



Rendezvous Art & Science



Mental Health in the Community

**Featuring dance, film, peer support expertise,
and innovative research**

Wednesday, May 3rd, 2017
5 to 7:30pm
Maison de la culture
5290, chemin de la Côte-des-Neiges
Montreal

Frances Skerritt
Jane Mappin
Daniel Firth
Robert Whitley
Joel Montanez
Loreen Pindera

**Join in the discussion about how to improve community-
based care for people living with mental health problems**

Bilingual free event! Everyone welcome!

RSVP by May 2nd, 2017 to: kim.tardif.chsm@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

About the presenters – in order of presentation



Rob Whitley is the Principal Investigator of the Social Psychiatry Research and Interest Group (SPRING) at the Douglas Hospital Research Center. He is also an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University. His three main research interests are recovery, stigma and men's mental health. He takes a human rights approach to his activities, using his research results to push for change in practice and policy. He has published over 100 papers in the field of social psychiatry, and currently writes a monthly column for the Huffington Post and Psychology Today.



Joel Montanez is a health and humanitarian psychologist and a social filmmaker with an interest in research, clinical work and advocacy regarding vulnerable populations. His current clinical work at the Institut de réadaptation Gingras-Lindsay de Montréal focuses on the rehabilitation of inpatients with amputations and severe orthopedic injuries, and his training activities with Doctors Without Borders concentrate on improving the skills of field humanitarian workers. His field work, with Action Against Hunger and MSF, has focused on improving the resilience and healing the traumatic conditions of victimized Kurdish, Rohingya groups and sexually abused victims. The short film on Immigrant Mental Health is part of his work with the Health Experiences Canada team at St. Mary's Research Centre.



For the past thirty years, **Jane Mappin** has worked actively as interpreter, choreographer and teacher. As creator, she is interested in the relationship between dance and other forms of artistic expression. After working for five years at Le Groupe de la Place Royale, in Ottawa, Jane became an independent choreographer in her native Montreal, in 1989. Since that time she has danced for many choreographers, and her choreographic work has been shown across Canada, South America and Europe. In 2013 Jane created *Lewis et Lucie* with interpreter Daniel Firth. Their collaboration continues with *Ils m'ont dit*, part of the trilogy *Je marche à côté de moi*, treating the delicate subject of mental illness. The third part of the trilogy, *A Different Code*, is being created by actress Marie Brassard. Jane has taught contemporary dance for thirty years. She has taught at L'École supérieure de ballet du Québec since 2007, and taught at the National Circus School this past year.



Daniel Firth is a dancer known for his great artistic sensibility. In 1993, he joined Montréal Danse, where he performed roles created by more than fifteen internationally renowned choreographers. Daniel has also worked for William Douglas, Estelle Claretton, Chantal Caron, and many independent choreographers, performing in Canada, the United States, South America, and many European

countries. After five years in the Lower St-Lawrence region, where he managed his own dance company and created his own works, Daniel has returned to Montreal. He now performs with Jane Mappin in the trilogy *Je marche à côté de moi* comprised of *Lewis et Lucie* (2013), for which he was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award (2015) for outstanding interpretation (male) in dance;



LEWIS ET LUCIE. A man sits alone on a park bench, talking to passersby, hoping for a moment of society. Speaking in stilted phrases, he offers fragments of his personal history, impressions, and obsessions. He embodies his words in movement, dancing with the damaged grace of those who live out of the mainstream. The outline of his story emerges – a small, sad story, repeated every day on park benches the world over, of an existence that never quite took full shape. *Lewis & Lucie* is a poetic evocation of marginality, solitude, and the tiny, crushing burdens of the past.

Frances Skerritt has worked as a peer specialist for about 9 years (a role and service she pioneered) for a mental health institution in Montreal. She has certifications at the national and provincial (Quebec) level, and has worked on the National Standards and Practices, for the Mental Health Commission of Canada, to help create the National Certification – Peer Support Accreditation Certification Canada (PSACC). She was honoured to work with 16 other countries to develop an international charter for peer support and is now on the board of the International Association of Peer Support (INAPS), and was chair for Interrelate for one and a half years. Frances has worked as a facilitator, and a lecturer at McGill University, and University of Montreal, as well as developing conferences nationally and internationally. She is still the only peer specialist hired at her institution and is helping to create other positions, and hire other peer support workers.



Loreen Pindera is a journalist and senior editor with CBC News in Montreal. She has spent more than 30 years covering a wide range of issues, with a special interest in health and public policy. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the RTDNA Sam Ross Award for Editorial/Commentary in 2016 and the RTDNA Dave Rogers Award for Best Long Feature for her documentary “Bringing Down the Barricades” in 2011. Loreen is the co-author, with the *Globe and Mail*’s Geoffrey York, of *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka*. In the rest of her life, Loreen trains for triathlons and writes about the tribulations of being an aging triathlete for *Triathlon Magazine*.