



**Across Boundaries' Quarterly Newsletter
(Fall Issue, 2009)**

Volume 1, Issue 2

**POVERTY, HEALTH DISPARITIES AND RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES
DISCUSSED AT ACROSS BOUNDARIES 14th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)**

Researcher indicates that poverty and racism determine the difference in health that are unfair and unjust because they result from conditions and policies that can be changed. Local data show priority needs and gaps for addressing racialized health disparities. Given the growing momentum and awareness of racism and other forms of oppression and their impact on health, what are some opportunities for Across Boundaries to influence change in Central LHIN, public health, local and provincial health systems? There were many facts and figures as well as challenges presented by the two guest speakers at the recent Across Boundaries AGM held on October 15, 2009.

Avvy Yao Yao Go, Clinical Director, Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic was one of the guest speakers. She spoke eloquently about the many structural and systemic barriers experienced by racialized communities such as unemployment, underemployment and the "glass ceiling" experienced by women which result in high poverty among immigrants and refugees from these communities.

Another distinguished guest speaker was Ms. Dianne Patychuk, an Epidemiologist and a Social and Health Equity Consultant. She presented issues that have made health care inaccessible to most racialized communities. Most of the issues she explored in her presentation were occasioned by lack of sufficient research especially in Canada. Health care is supposedly a basic human right in Canada, and yet, there's evidence that racialized people do not receive the same quality of services as the dominant communities.

According to Ms. Patychuk's research, the differences in health are often caused by social and health policies and conditions that can be changed. For e.g. racism impacts health care in several ways racialized and immigrant individuals experience; low income, social exclusion, internalized oppression, poor environment and poor employment, inadequate medical services and differential treatment of people from racialized groups.

Health disparities in low-income communities are significantly higher than the general population in Canada. For people from racialized groups, they face more barriers to access, prevention programs, specialist care, surgery, and diagnostic procedures. This leads to more experience with mental health problems, chronic diseases, infections and higher mortality rate. Such experiences are exacerbated by experiences of racism and discrimination which leads to higher levels of isolation, loneliness and depression.

Ms. Patychuk suggested that responses should include; active resistance, community organization to create awareness, changing perceptions and stereotypes that most racialized people encounter. Among the strategies she mentioned included greater involvement of racialized communities in research studies that will identify the disparities and consequences in the system while rest of society commitment to increasing equitable access to health care, and more involvement in actions to reduce existing disparities.

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AWARD TO AN ACROSS BOUNDARIES DONOR

During our AGM held on October 15, 2009 Mourace Scott was presented with a plaque by Sandi Bell, Board Chair, in appreciation of his ongoing support to Across Boundaries. Mourace and his partner Jennifer have donated proceeds raised from their anniversary party to Across Boundaries where they asked guests to make a donation to one of their selected charities instead of gifts to them. The exercise raised awareness of Across Boundaries in the general public and raise funds for an excellent cause. They wish to see the funds support youth that are looking to improve their lives.



Mourace and Jennifer are educators and business owners here in Toronto. They own a collection of companies that protect and enrich people's lives. Services include life insurance, financial and personal mentoring, business consulting and legal and ID theft plan sales. They have made a commitment to contribute to causes they believe in. By donating time, money, contacts, or resources to chosen organizations, they try to help organizations and individuals achieve their goals.

LUNCH WITH GUESTS FROM THE CULTURE AND INTERNATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

On Wednesday October 14, 2009 Across Boundaries played host to guests who were attending a two day Culture and International Mental Health Conference here in Toronto. Four participants together with one of the Conference Co-Chairs Dr. Ted Lo had lunch with clients and staff. This was followed by a music therapy session facilitated by Alex Punzalan. The guests had a chance to participate in the session which includes drumming, singing and piano. The luncheon was part of the pre-conference activities that had been arranged for the participants.

The conference took place on October 15 – 16, 2009 and brought together clinicians & researchers in the area of Culture and Mental Health for all over the world. The conference theme was “Resilience & Vulnerability”. Among the topics discussed were Depression & Somatization, Resilience in Action, Trauma, Recovery & Refugees, Research in Hard to Reach Populations, Culture Matters: Passion & Vignettes and Global Mental Health Innovative Programs. Martha Ocampo our Education and Resource Manager participated on a panel discussion on “Resilience in Action” at the conference.

FEATURED PAINTING



This artwork highlights Thupten's expression and ability to “Give Voice” to his feelings . Thupten illustrates through the large mouth and vibrant colours how he can articulate himself as a man, refugee and creative spirit. Although he usually paints landscapes and animals today, he decided to paint a baboon which he felt connected to, while viewing photographs of various animals. This picture he felt captured his true feelings which he was unable to express through words. Non-verbally, he has transmitted his message of hope and expression so that others can also give voice to their own feelings and the frustrations they may encounter in life in a positive way.

SUMMER CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHT'S

On Tuesday, July 21, 2009, Across Boundaries released the results of three need studies through a conference held at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The conference was attended by 140 participants.

Kim Baker, Acting CEO of Central LHIN, spoke of the diversity range in Central LHIN, the need for initiatives such as these and working together to produce on Health Equity Framework for all. Dr. Kwame McKenzie, the chief investigator, provided a summary and the recommendations from the three studies entitled:

- Re-conceptualizing “Trauma”: Examining the Mental Health Impact of Discrimination, Torture and Migration for Racialized Groups
- Addressing the Mental Health Needs of People from Racialized Groups with Concurrent Disorders
- The Mental Health Needs of Older Adults from Racialized Groups in Toronto

His presentation and the reports have been posted on AB's website (www.acrossboundaries.ca).

“How We Do It: Across Boundaries’ anti-racist, holistic service delivery model” manual, was also launched at the conference by Janet Durbin, the chief investigator and Clarissa Chandler, the project consultant. This report summarizes and builds upon the findings of Across Boundaries May 2007 report, *“Clarifying an Anti-Racism, Holistic Service Delivery Model in a Toronto Health Agency”*. This project was financially supported by the CAMH Community Research Capacity Enhancement Program (2004-2005). This report can be found on AB's website.

There were three separate workshops for each study which followed the presentations. The workshops were facilitated by:

- Clarissa Chandler
- Curtis Bell
- Caroline Kwok and Fatima Jackson.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAM UPDATE

Since the launching of the program in April 2009, there have been many requests from mental health/addiction and settlement agencies to provide training to their organization on cultural competency and anti-racism/anti-oppression (AR/AO) through workshops. Martha Ocampo, Manager of Education and Resource has been busy responding to these requests as well as making presentations at local, national and international conferences. Workshops vary according to the requests made and needs of the agency. Agencies are encouraged to schedule two-days training for a maximum of up to 40 participants to get a fuller understanding of Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression principles (AR/AO) and how it applies to the delivery of service. For more information about the training workshops please contact Martha Ocampo at 416 787-3007 ext 224; martha@acrossboundaries.ca

AT HOME/CHEZ SOI RESEARCH DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN TORONTO

Across Boundaries (AB) has now added a new Intensive Case Management (ICM) service for individuals who are in need of housing. At Home/Chez Soi Demonstration Project funded by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) focuses on highly needed housing in the Greater Toronto Area for homeless people who suffer from serious mental illness. This is a nation wide project being launched in five major cities across Canada: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton. It is a four year project which commenced on April 1, 2009 and is expected to end on March 31, 2013. The participants will be referred from shelters, detox centers, hospitals, drop-ins and some community agencies. All clients for this project will be screened by research team based at St Michael's Hospital in downtown Toronto before they are admitted.

The housing model that will be used is based on the "Pathway Home First model" which has been successfully operating in the United States. All staff for the project have been hired and trained extensively. At the national training held in September, 2009, Across Boundaries was invited to conduct a workshop on cultural competency and anti-racism/anti-oppression which was facilitated by Martha Ocampo, AB's Manager of Education and Resource.

In Toronto, COTA Health and Toronto North Support Services/Community Resource Connections of Toronto are the other agencies participating with AB in the project. Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) and ICM are the services to be delivered by these agencies.

Ethnoracial ICM Services

Across Boundaries' ICM services will provide specialized supports to 100 moderate -needs participants from racialized groups. The service will have a holistic approach to care within an AR/AO framework. The staff team is comprised of a Manager, five Case Managers and one nurse. The Toronto Ethnoracial Working Group of the project continues to meet monthly and is chaired by a staff from AB. The group seeks to understand how the holistic model of care within an AR/AO framework operates and how it is implemented in the service delivery.

Recovery and Housing First Model

Recovery is an ongoing journey of self healing and transformation. It is re-claiming a positive sense of self, despite the challenges of psychiatric disability. Recovery is actively self managing one's life and mental health; in order to control psychiatric symptoms, create a positive lifestyle and achieve higher levels of wellness. Recovery is reclaiming roles and a life beyond being a consumer in the mental health system (Ridgway, 1999).

The project will be guided by the principles of Recovery and Homes First Model. It is a non medical model where participants are not required to have any prerequisite for housing. The program recognizes that housing is a basic human right, and deviates from the old traditional view where the prerequisites are setting up all the supports before housing the client. In housing first model, the goal is to re-house the person regardless of past or current behaviours where participants do not require mental health treatment plans, addiction recovery, or other forms of compliancy prior to moving in.

At Home/Chez Soi Demonstration Project Lead Dr. Jayne Barker and Faye More, Toronto-site Coordinator, visited Across Boundaries to learn about the work of Across Boundaries and talk about the progress of the project. The two spent the afternoon in an informal discussion with the staff, management, Board and clients of the agency.

HEATHER'S STORY

I am thankful to be a part of the Art Therapy group at Across Boundaries as I find it helps me to heal and become a better person.

It is nice to feel the sense of community that I do here. I get to meet a wide range of people from varying cultures, backgrounds and walks of life that are also dealing with various issues. We come together as peers in a safe environment to express ourselves through our art. We support one another listening to what each of us has to share, offering our thoughts, feelings and experiences. In sharing difficulties we are facing, we can gain support and insight/understanding into ourselves and find better ways to manage and cope. Sometimes it is easier to create art than it is to find the words to describe what you are feeling. When trying to explain a piece you have worked on, it helps you to articulate the feelings more and to connect in a safe way with what is going on inside you.

Discussing another persons work brings up topics and thoughts that help you connect better with your own experience and the piece you have created and it is interesting to see how at times, common themes will emerge in our work. Feeling connected to another and relating helps to bring a feel-

ing of well being since so many people facing mental illness live in isolation and feel cut off from the world. In Art Therapy we get a chance to be with people in a positive and enriching way.

Art can also provide us with a break from all the self introspective work that therapy brings and we can just have fun creating. Since joining the group I have been inspired to do art at home as well. We live in a world filled with stress, rushing, hustle and bustle and I feel creating art helps to calm and center me, connecting me to my spirit and to what is really important. Sometimes it is easy to feel overwhelmed by issues and what we have to face day to day and I feel that the art therapy at Across Boundaries provides the opportunity for self expression in a safe environment, a healthy way to release what we are dealing with. It enables us to have a chance to witness and honour the healing journey of each person as the sacred rite of passage that it is.

Thanks to Across Boundaries and special gratitude to our Art Therapist, Afrinda Lord and to those of you who participate each week! J



IN-HOUSE EVENTS AND PROGRAMS FOR AB'S CLIENTS/PARTICIPANTS

"Lets Discuss" with Martha was held September 3 & 10 and October 22 & 29, 2009.

This was a series of mini-workshops with clients that discussed issues such as racism, violence against women, homophobia, etc. and strategies on how to overcome them.

Leadership Training – 8 Sessions to be held at AB from October 23rd to December 11th, 2009. Certificates will be given to participants on the last day of the training. Topics to be covered include: Self Esteem, Interpersonal Skills, Communication-Cultural Perspectives, Public Speaking, Goal Setting, Time Management, Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression

Diabetes Education – on December 2, 2009 will be facilitated by Mya Cijendran and Sandra

Riceman from South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

Winter Celebrations – Wednesday December 16, 2009 and they will include Christmas, Kwanza, Eid, and Diwali

Y-Connect

"What's Your Story Group" has resumed on October 14, 2009. The program is facilitated by Ben Osei of Youth Unlimited and Ajibola Callisto every Wednesday.

"Never Too Late" is facilitated by Kevin Panton and will resume on November 17, 2009 at the Jane-Finch Mall .The group is held every Tuesday from 4:00-6:00 pm.

SHADES of POWER

A women only fundraiser to raise awareness about mental health challenges for women of colour in the GTA.

Evening includes stories from mental health consumers, performances and dinner

DATE:

Sunday January 10th 2010

TIME:

5:30 PM - 8:30 PM with Dinner Provided

LOCATION:

North York Memorial Community Hall
4 blocks north of Sheppard on the West Side of Yonge Street, walking distance from the North York City Centre station

COST:

\$25 (includes a \$15 tax receipt)

For tickets contact:

Mya at mya.vijendran@gmail.com

Funds raised will support Across Boundaries, a mental health agency providing supports and services for individuals from racialized communities.

The journey of the butterfly symbolizes change that transforms and renew life. The innovative work of Across Boundaries transforms the lives of racialized families challenged by mental health concerns. An investment in Across Boundaries is an investment in your community.

Yes, I want to contribute to Across Boundaries' vital work.

I've enclosed a donation of: \$20 \$50 \$100 Other

Method of payment: Cheque Cash

Name: _____

Address: _____, _____, _____, _____, _____
(Street Number & Name) (Apt. No.) (City) (Prov) (Postal Code)

Telephone: (H) _____ (W) _____ (Cell) _____

Email: _____



Tax Receipt are issued annually in February for donation of \$10 or more. Charitable Registration No: 14098 8262 RR01
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