

CANNABIS & PSYCHOSIS

EXPLORING THE LINK



WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO

PIVOT 2020

Well that was quite a year! Although we couldn't get together in person, our project faired well through the shift to becoming fully online due to COVID-19.

The project's Youth Action Committee shifted our budget allocations from a national educational media transit campaign to an online course for Canadian youth on Cannabis & Mental Health.

We reached out to YouthREX and the Mental Health Commission of Canada to collaborate on producing the course and hope to launch it in Fall 2021!

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CANNABIS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT



About The Project

Cannabis and Psychosis in collaboration with [YouthREX](#) and the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#) are developing a course for youth centring Cannabis and Mental Health. We'll provide evidence-based and engaging curriculum addressing the relationship between cannabis use and mental health. The project will explore a range of key issues, from understanding why people choose to use, the impact of cannabis legislation on diverse communities, harm reduction basics and more.

The course is created by youth and made for youth - ages 14-24. Our Youth Action Committee, along with Research Assistants from YouthRex, have worked closely in developing relevant and impactful content for the course that will resonate with our target demographics.



Teen Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Cannabis and Mental Health Project assembled a group of 12 teens across Canada - ages 16-19 to review the content and design of the course. A total of five sessions were held where participants provided insightful comments and feedback on course content and design. Further engagement with TAC will occur throughout the project.

Next Steps

The course is set to launch in Fall 2021

By that time we will:

- Have content reviewed by Researchers, Youth Workers, Educators, Youth Action Committee and Teen Youth Committee.
- Translate course/website into French
- Continue outreach with youth focused and educational organizations
- Establish dissemination strategy



SSC SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY OF CANADA



YOUTHREX



Mental Health Commission of Canada

Commission de la santé mentale du Canada



Health Canada

ASK THE EXPERT SERIES

In-Depth Conversations

Our Ask the Expert Series is a monthly live event where we invite experts and people with lived experience to discuss all things cannabis and mental health - sharing their knowledge with our audience!

We have facilitated many discussions through our Ask The Expert which are moderated by members of our Youth Action Committee. Several of our panels have been in collaboration with YouthRex and VoxCann.

We touch on many topics like:

- Racial (in)justice and Cannabis
- Growing Cannabis Smart and Safer
- A Mother-Daughter Conversation on Cannabis
- Through Our Eyes- Lived Experience with Cannabis and Psychosis



Racial (in)justice and Cannabis Panel

THROUGH OUR EYES



LIVED EXPERIENCES WITH CANNABIS AND PSYCHOSIS

For our fourth and fifth Ask The Expert episodes we held a candid discussion with our "Through Our Eyes" panelists, answering questions about their lived experience with cannabis and psychosis.

Our next Ask The Expert, hosted by VoxCann, will be International Perspectives on cannabis. Stay up to date on our Ask The Expert events by signing up to our mailing list and checking in with Cannabis & Psychosis on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Looking Back - Thinking Forward + COVID-19



The COVID-19 Pandemic caused unprecedented changes in the lives of Canadians, and has significantly affected the mental health of many in a multitude of ways. Here at C&P, we are interested to see how people's relationship with cannabis changed as we transitioned from normal life to lockdown from April - July 2020.

We surveyed visitors to our site who elected to complete our survey. Overall, 37 participants across 10 provinces and territories across Canada completed the survey

COVID-19 & CANNABIS REPORT

- Most (81%) were recreational users
- About half said they consumed cannabis to self-medicate
- Two-thirds of respondents reported a change in their mental health-related to cannabis after the onset of COVID-19
- 60% of respondent's consumption increased
- About half of respondents did not employ harm-reduction methods in their consumption

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE



Knowledge Sharing Methods

- Interviews
- Photovoice
- Blog Posts
- Poetry
- Research Translation
- Q&A Sections
- News Articles
- Infographics

#ResearchRoundUp

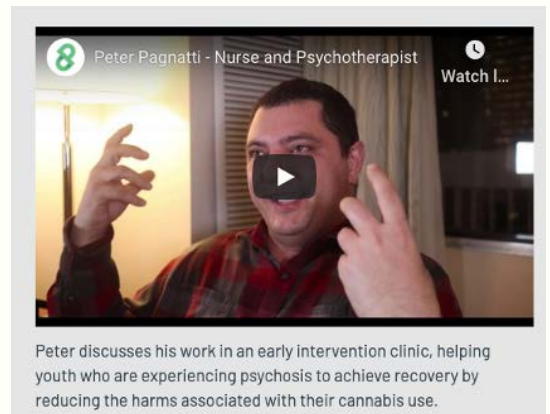
To increase engagement with diverse audiences over the pandemic, we have launched a new knowledge translation initiative. #ResearchRoundUp is a public engagement campaign that shares evidence-based information about cannabis and mental health. This innovative campaign includes sharing summaries of scientific publications in a unique visual format to make information more accessible and appealing for diverse audiences.



Life without cannabis: A nature's perspective

This is what smoke-free looks like to me.
I can appreciate the beauty, the nature.
I feel grounded and gives me a sense of equanimity.
Also makes me think there is more out there.
A point for quitting and a purpose for my life!
I have known struggles and to accept struggles as part of myself -
To be perfect.
But, even nature is imperfect.
Some layers appear peaceful, the sky is perfect no matter where I look in the sky.
Yet, I know that nature has its own struggles.
I can step off the railing and into the sky.
I could get sucked up in the turbulence -
then if I ride the turbulence -
I float along beyond the rapids and find my freedom - not addiction!
That is the other side of addiction.
I can visualize my commitment to myself and to stay true to what I want to do.

The sun is shining, the trees are preparing to bloom.
The bay represents life/the sky is blue, there are trees in the distance that signify health and always trying to reach a goal.
This is what quitting smoking looks like!
The dirt road signifies grounding and a symbol to keep feet out of the mud, to not stay stuck!
The path leads to belonging.
I am reminded of the thousands of dollars I have spent on tobacco and cannabis - which has stood in the way of belonging to anything like this.
Leif Harris



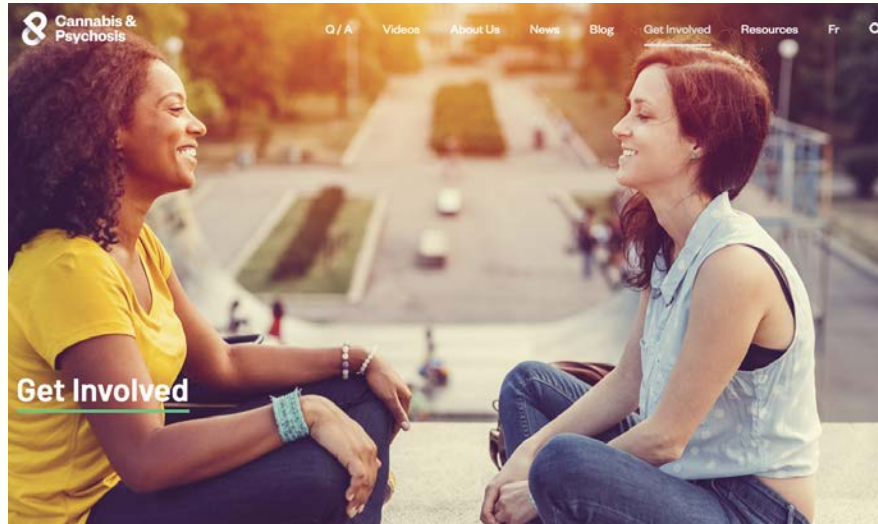
Partnerships

In collaboration with the Canadian Nurses Association and HyperActive, the Exploring the Link team is creating a youth-friendly animated video on the effects of cannabis on the endocannabinoid system. Cannabis & Psychosis is funding the production of a community-based "zine" (a short, independent magazine) by Bloom, centered around individual experience with cannabis use and mental health. Members of the Youth Action Committee also reviewed the content for a mobile cannabis education station for rural youth, created by the Alberta Rural Development Network.

OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

GET INVOLVED

We are excited to announce the latest addition to our project website *drumroll please* our Get Involved page! In keeping with our mission to engage and amplify youth voices, we have launched the Get Involved page. This page enables other young people to be a part of the conversation surrounding cannabis and mental health by submitting a story, an opinion piece, feedback, and helpful resources to our team. We hope to use these submissions to continue to inform and strengthen the project and our commitment to youth-led mental health education.



OUTREACH & PARTNERSHIPS

We are incredibly honoured to announce that two Indigenous community members, Connor Lafortune & Will Landon, have joined our team in order to help facilitate our project's engagement with Indigenous stakeholders. On May 11th, representatives from our YAC had the privilege of presenting our project to Grand Council Treaty #3 in the hopes of partnering with the council and learning about how the project can serve the community. We hope that these opportunities are the start of a long, fruitful, and equitable partnership with local Indigenous community members.

Additionally, we have partnered with VoxCann, an amazing Québécois cannabis education organization, for a 2-part panel on international perspectives on cannabis as a part of our "Ask the Expert" series.

To stay up to date on our latest partnerships, projects, and events, follow us on our socials!



NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Will Landon

Indigenous Outreach Coordinator

Waabishkigaabo (Will Landon) is a citizen of Wauzhushk Onigum Nation which is on the northern shores of Lake of the Woods in Ontario, he is of the Lynx Clan, and is Seventh Generation from the signing of Treaty #3. He is the proud father of a daughter. Waabishkigaabo studied Political Studies at the University of Manitoba and represented Indigenous students as the Indigenous rep on the Student Union. From University he was elected to multiple youth representative positions at Grand Council Treaty #3, Ontario First Nation Young Peoples' Council, and AFN National Youth Council. Holding multiple portfolios but focused primarily on mental health, social policy, and health policy. Waabishkigaabo utilizes his experience in low context and high context culture relationship building to help build bridges between Canadian organizations and First Nations' communities and people.



Natasha Taylor

Practicum Student - University of New Brunswick

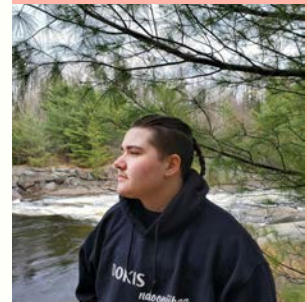
Natasha is entering the final year of her Psychology (B.Sc.) degree at the Saint John campus of the University of New Brunswick, minoring in Criminal Justice and Biology. She is passionate about promoting mental health awareness, making knowledge accessible, and giving a voice to individuals with lived experience. She is currently working as a research assistant at the Housing, Mobilization, Engagement and Resiliency Lab (HOME-RL) at the University of New Brunswick.



Connor Lafortune

Youth Action Committee, Outreach

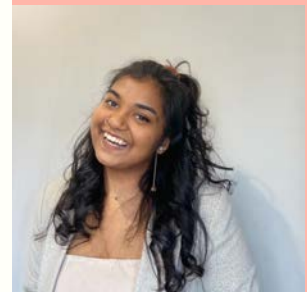
Nimkiins ndizhinikaaz bineshiinh ndondem Okidendawt ndonjiibaa Anishinaabe nini ndow. Connor "Little Thunder Spirit" Lafortune is a second-year student of the Indigenous Studies program with a double major in Law and Justice as well as Race and Gender Studies. He is the Male Traditional Coordinator and Vice-President on the Indigenous Student Circle at Laurentian University. He occupies various roles on boards in Sudbury Ontario as both a Francophone and Indigenous person. He is currently working for the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation to create Life Promotion Toolkits for Indigenous peoples. Since high school, Connor has been a youth facilitator for La Fédération de la Jeunesse Franco-Ontarienne, where he runs workshops, activities, and speaks on panels for Franco-Ontarian high school students. In high-school, Connor sat on the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit council for his school board, where he still sits as a community member and had acquired an internship on his First Nation working alongside O'gema and council.



Maleesha Paskarathas

Cannabis and Mental Health, Project Researcher

Maleesha is currently completing her degree in Global Health, specializing in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at York University. She studies the social determinants of health and understandings of the broader influences that shape one's health. Maleesha is passionate about mental health and hopes to work in further strengthening the connection in fostering better mental health support and awareness amongst youth and families of various backgrounds such as immigrant, refugee, diaspora, and racialized individuals. With lived experience of challenging mental health issues herself and her brother who was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, Maleesha sees the importance of better connection in mental health services and cultural understanding on creating healthier societies.



Kiah Ellis-Durity

Cannabis and Mental Health, Project Facilitator

Kiah (she/her) holds a degree in Comparative Religion, Culture and Political Science. She currently sits on the national board of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy. With Exploring the Link, she works as a Project Facilitator for the Cannabis and Mental Health Project. Through her work Kiah aims at normalizing discussions around cannabis while empowering youth to make educated, well-informed decisions.

