



Mississauga Arts Council and Mass Culture's Arts for Mental Health Conference provides hope for ArtsCare

Mississauga, ON - October 13, 2021

“This movement brings the healing powers of creative experience into health care practice,” said Mayor Bonnie Crombie in her welcoming conference address. “It is my hope that by connecting health and social services agencies with creative groups that we can foster creative experiences that are accessible to those who will benefit from them the most.”

[Mississauga Arts Council](#) (MAC) and [Mass Culture/ Mobilisation culturelle](#) (MC) brought together health practitioners, academics, artists, politicians, and leaders in the arts sector at the first Arts for Mental Health Conference in Canada on October 6, 2021.

130 participants gathered in a successful conference to brainstorm and explore the rationale for, design and implementation of a pilot program that will deliver and expand arts programs to people living with mental health issues in Mississauga. Learn more about ArtsCare: artscare.ca

“Through its network, Mississauga Arts Council has the foundation needed to bring research into action, co-creating a strategy(ies) that seamlessly brings the arts and health sector together to incite positive social change,” says Robin Sokoloski, Mass Culture’s Director of Organizational Development. “Mass Culture feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to support MAC in advancing ArtsCare.”

In Act One of the conference, Jennifer Buchanan (Founder of JB Music Therapy and Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Music Therapists), opened by sharing a bereavement story, highlighting the importance of arts through her work as a music therapist. She was followed by Dr. Colin Saldanha (Family Physician), who shared the benefits and needs for creative experiences from a healthcare perspective.

Act Two of the conference invited attendees to a panel discussion hosted by Susan Ksiezopolski (HeartMath Certified Building Personal Resilience Coach and founder of WriteWell). During the panel, Dr. Chanth Seyone (Founding Director of Acquired Brain Injury Clinic at Toronto Western Hospital), discussed the positive impact of the arts on

the physiology of the brain, and attendees heard a first-hand experience from Christine Long (Artist and Co-Chair of ArtTrendz collective).

Act Three heard from presenters, Sonia Hsiung (Project Lead, Communications and Stakeholder Relations at the Alliance for Healthier Communities), Kelly Straughan (Executive Artist Director of Workman Arts), and Melissa Tafler (Coordinator of the Arts and Health program at Baycrest Centre), who each presented a living case study of how they have successfully incorporated the arts into their specialized programs supporting better mental health.

The arts were woven into the conference by Tanya Neumeyer, a professional poet who recapped the conversation with two powerful spoken word performances.

Arts for Mental Health Award

MAC's annual Arts for Mental Health Award sponsored by Bell was awarded to Susan Ksiezopolski for her active work in her community, creating and sharing experiences that fuel a sense of well-being and support mental health through arts-based programs. In addition to her well-being workshops, she produced the [Art of Wellness Documentary \(2021\)](#), highlighting the health benefits of existing arts-based programs in Peel Region.

"Oh my heart, I am speechless, honoured, and humbled. Thank you to MAC for your support and everything you do for artists and to Bell for all of the funding they provide to this important initiative," says Susan Ksiezopolski, Arts for Mental Health Award Winner. "Let's make this better, everyone deserves access to these programs, they are life changing and transformative." Award presentation video: youtu.be/bHEOpJk8YAw

The Future of ArtsCare

"According to CAMH, mental health issues affect nearly half the global population at some point, and here in Ontario, half the population will experience or will have experienced a mental health challenge by the age of 40," stated **Hon. Michael Tibollo**, Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions to conference participants. "There's been an increase in using art to promote mental health as it has a positive effect, which we know is supported by research." Minister Tibollo's conference remarks here: youtu.be/_jjUFGcp4.

MAC will be meeting with Minister Tibollo to discuss the future of ArtsCare and social prescriptions in Peel Region and look forward to integrating creative experiences into the health care system.

“This is just the beginning of the ArtsCare movement.” says Mike Douglas, MAC’s Executive Director during closing conference remarks, “The evidence is there, the benefits of creative experiences on mental health are life changing and integrating an arts social prescription program in Peel Region will help residents, especially in a time where COVID-19 has created such a demand for mental health care.”

To learn more about ArtsCare and how to get involved, visit artscare.ca.

The Arts for Mental Health Conference is funded by a Seed Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and co-sponsored by the City of Mississauga, Bell, and Alectra Utilities.

About Mississauga Arts Council:

The Mississauga Arts Council is a registered charity, dedicated to accelerating progress toward the attainment of our Vision of Mississauga, as a vibrant cultural community where arts and culture thrive! Our mission is to empower the Arts Economy by Creating more opportunities & capacity; Connecting artists to audiences and each other; and Celebrating artists’ achievements. Learn more: mississaugaartscouncil.com

About Mass Culture:

Mass Culture is a collaborative support organization that takes a community based approach to providing diverse parties with the context and connections needed to enhance the equitable mobilization of arts and culture research. By convening cultural workers and academics, Mass Culture provides a platform for knowledge to be explored, widely understood, and mobilized. Learn more: massculture.ca

-30-

More quotes are available upon request.

For more information on the potential of Arts Care, please contact:

Sherri Murray

Communications Producer

Mississauga Arts Council

media@mississaugaartscouncil.com