

## Meet the Provincial MHSU Network Team

The Network team collectively brings a wealth of relevant expertise and experience to the work we do. We plan, organize and facilitate all engagements, as well as analyze, summarize, and develop a variety of knowledge products to meet the needs of the network, our partners and collaborators.



# Anita David she/her

Lived Experience Strategic Advisor

I ACKNOWLEDGE WITH GRATITUDE, THAT I AM ON THE TRADITIONAL, ANCESTRAL AND UNCEDED TERRITORIES OF THE X<sup>w</sup>MƏƏK<sup>w</sup>ƏYƏM (MUSQUEAM), SK<sup>w</sup>X<sup>w</sup>U7MESH (SQUAMISH), AND SƏLILWƏTƏŁ (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) NATIONS, WHO HAVE NURTURED AND CARED FOR THE LANDS AND WATERS AROUND US FOR ALL TIME. I GIVE MY ETERNAL GRATITUDE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY HERE.

As the lived experience strategic advisor since 2022, I inform the work of the Network through my expertise in mental health and substance use. Before working on this team, I used to work in communications until I had a series of life changing experiences where I nearly lost my life three times in fourteen months. Those experiences marked me deeply, but it was also brought forth a powerful rebirth that led me to become a connector, facilitator, educator, advisor, researcher and speaker. I also co-chair the Hallway Group, lived experience council, through the Mental Health Commission of Canada and am a member of the inaugural lived experience council through the Global Leadership Exchange.



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My hope for the Network is that we continue to create safer spaces and give people with lived and living experience who are marginalized a place to have their voices heard, valued and upheld within our work. My hope is that we continue to engage, amplify and empower many more diverse partners, including people with lived and living experience, and inspire action to lessen stigma and create change at an individual and systemic level.

I am a first generation Canadian of Indian, Jewish decent who grew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia before spending most of my adult life in Vancouver, British Columbia. I am a pampered princess since although I do like the outdoors, I am not very outdoorsy. I admit that I am too attached to all my luxuries. I spend my time stretching my imagination through writing and theatre, finding balance through yoga and meditation and desperately pursuing the love of my cat, "Caaaaaat"!

# Deborah Ross she/her

Provincial Director of Strategic Initiatives

I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF LIVING AND WORKING ON THE BEAUTIFUL, TRADITIONAL, AND UNCEDED LANDS OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLES - X<sup>w</sup>MƏΘKWƏÝƏM (MUSQUEAM), SKWXWÚ7MESH (SQUAMISH) AND SƏ́LÍLWƏTΛ?/SELILWITULH (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) NATIONS. I STRIVE TO HONOUR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' STEWARDSHIP OF THE LANDS AND WATERS, TO LEARN FROM AND INTEGRATE INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING, SEEING, AND DOING, INTO MY WORK, WHILE ALSO DOING MY PART TO ERADICATE INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC RACISM.



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I've been involved in a lot of system-level work, at provincial, territorial, and national levels. In my experience, the 'secret sauce' for impactful system improvement includes: collective will, diverse interests and angles of view, data and published evidence, and a strong attention to process (the 'how'). (Of course, funding also helps). This is what the Network is all about, and I see such powerful potential through it. My role is primarily strategic in nature; the team does most of the heavy lifting.

With training in clinical psychology and years of work across multiple jurisdictions in mental health, substance use, and criminal justice research, evaluation, and system reviews, policy, and planning, I bring both methodological strength and an orientation toward system improvement. It is at the system level that I see the greatest potential to really move the dial on how we serve people with mental health, substance use, and other needs. I have been in my current role for almost six years, and with the organization for twenty years overall.



Originally from Quebec, of mostly Scottish ancestry, I migrated west after treeplanting in Northern BC in my early twenties and getting a brief glimpse of Vancouver. It has always been my dream to live near an ocean, so here I am, 28 years into the dream that became a reality. For me, it's all about the water and getting out in/ on it – be it ocean, lake, river, and even the frozen form – my happy place is stand-up paddleboarding, dragon boating, outrigger canoeing, swimming, and nordic skiing! I am lucky to be married to my best friend and to be a parent to two amazing young adults and one precious senior Labradoodle.

# Krista English<sub>she/her</sub>

Network Senior Lead

I AM GRATEFUL TO LIVE AND WORK ON THE TRADITIONAL UNCEDED TERRITORIES OF THE X<sup>w</sup>MƏΘK<sup>w</sup>ƏYƏM (MUSQUEAM), SKWXWÚ7MESH (SQUAMISH), SƏLÍLWƏTATŁ (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH) AND K<sup>w</sup>IK<sup>w</sup>ƏŁƏM (KWIKWETLEM) PEOPLE. I AM COMMITTED TO LEARNING FROM AND LISTENING TO INDIGENOUS VOICES, ACKNOWLEDGING THEIR ONGOING STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE, AND WORKING TOWARDS RECONCILIATION AND HEALING. I AM ALSO COMMITTED TO CHANGING WHEN I LEARN HOW TO DO SOMETHING BETTER.

I'm a network scientist and have contributed to population, public and global health through applied research, program design and evaluation. I have translated insights from network modelling of infectious diseases to other contagious phenomenon, such as knowledge translation (KT) – both are fundamentally embedded in our relationships. Understanding the pathways that facilitate or inhibit knowledge spread on a network can lead to improved organizational design, performance and innovation.



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My vision for the Network is captured, in part, through its unique design, which addresses the inherent complexity of systemic gaps through cross collaboration and emergent discovery. The Network is designed to engage people along the continuum of MHSU care, including the people with lived/ living experience (PWLLE), service providers, decision makers, leaders, researchers and others. This diversity is necessary to understand the unmet needs, and support the co-development of innovative solutions and evidence-informed decision-making.

I'm originally from Newfoundland but have been in the lower-mainland equally as long. I've always loved to travel and have visited multiple countries across 6 continents, and even lived in a few of them. I currently live on the north shore with my family and enjoy being steps from the beautiful Lynn Valley trails. While I'm accumulating fewer air miles these days, I'm very happy to spend most of my free time chauffeuring my daughter to her activities and cheering on the sidelines.

# Renee Cormier she/her

Network Lead

I ACKNOWLEDGE, WITH DEEP GRATITUDE THAT I LIVE, WORK AND PLAY AS AN UNINVITED GUEST ON THE UNCEDED AND TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE X<sup>w</sup>MƏΘK<sup>w</sup>ƏYƏM (MUSQUEAM), SE<sup>l</sup>Í<sup>l</sup>WITULH (TSLEIL WAUTUTH), SK<sup>W</sup>X<sup>w</sup>WÚ7MESH (SQUAMISH) AND K<sup>w</sup>IK<sup>w</sup>Ə<sup>l</sup>ƏM (KWIKWETLEM) NATIONS, IN WHAT IS NOW COLONIALY KNOWN AS VANCOUVER AND BURNABY.

I began working with BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services in July 2024, bringing 30 years of experience in the fields of mental health and substance use (MHSU) research and knowledge translation to my role with the Provincial MHSU Network. As Lead of the Network, I bring my commitment to elevating the voices of lived/living experience and to cultural agility, safety and humility to my work facilitating knowledge exchange, generation and dissemination across the continuum of care with the aim of improving the health and wellness of people with complex MHSU needs.



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My vision for the Network is to enhance and improve the system designed to support people with complex MHSU needs by facilitating partnership and collaboration between sectors and organizations across the system in British Columbia. My role in facilitating this vision includes providing opportunities for a diversity of voices to be heard, including in dialogue with one another, and developing tools, resources and training opportunities to fill critical gaps in knowledge and capacity in the system.

I was born and raised in rural Manitoba and all my favourite things to do today originated from my childhood: gardening, going for long walks in nature, reading and building communities of people who care for each other.

# Shirley Paulsen Wilson she/her

Lived Experience Strategic Advisor

ÉY SWÁYEL. IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY ON THE TRADITIONAL AND UNCEDED TERRITORY OF THE SEMÁ:TH FIRST NATION AND MATHXWÍ FIRST NATION. WITH THIS, I RESPECT THE LONGSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT INDIGENOUS NATIONS HAVE TO THIS LAND, AS THEY ARE THE ORIGINAL CARETAKERS.



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I am lived and living experience strategic advisor (family) to the Network, since April 2023. In mid-2021, I began as a patient family partner for BC Mental Health Substance Use. With a fondness for service (I blame my mother!) I am a long-serving elected school trustee for my community of Abbotsford, along with provincial leadership in the various roles that governance brings.

My career is as an event and partnership specialist. In my spare time, I am a storyteller, #tellingjacobsstory, and I volunteer with national and local organizations.

To me, as we edge toward the 8th anniversary of the BC provincial emergency related to drug toxicity, I see the crisis akin to the Titanic. The royal “we” are in over our heads and can’t turn back, but the Network should be able to send out more rescue teams and boats to stop the tragedy from unfolding further. To this, I bring the long view, high level experience around strategy and policy, and hope.



I raised two children, courtesy of my practice husband, and now spend my days with my best husband, my daughter and her cat, and our dog. We all enjoy travel and good food.

We grieve the loss of Jacob who will forever be 24 years old. We are his voice of hope.

# Sirah Ghuman she/her

Network Project Coordinator

I WANT TO HUMBLLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I LIVE, LEARN, AND WORK ON THE STOLEN ANCESTRAL TERRITORIES OF THE X<sup>w</sup>MƏΘK<sup>w</sup>ƏYƏM (MUSQUEAM), SK<sup>w</sup>X<sup>w</sup>U7MESH (SQUAMISH), SƏLILWƏTƏŁ (TSLEIL-WAUTUTH), AND K<sup>w</sup>IK<sup>w</sup>ƏŁƏM (KWIKWETLEM) NATIONS WHO HAVE STEWARDED THESE LANDS FOR TIME IMMEMORIAL.



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After working at various organizations in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside for almost three years, I moved to Toronto to complete my Master of Public Health in Social and Behavioural Health Sciences (Health Promotion) at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. My cumulative experience has allowed me to utilize a social justice lens and actively engage with patients and families across multiple projects. After completing practicum placements with CAMH and BCMHSUS, I started my role as a Project Coordinator with the Provincial MHSU Network team in May 2024!

My vision for the Network entails creating a space to facilitate the voices of person with lived and living experience, frontline support workers, and other care providers to enhance communication, generate ideas, and highlight changes that could improve the system of care for people experiencing complex MHSU challenges. I am looking forward to centring equity, strengthening cross-sectoral care collaboration, and developing innovative solutions that could hopefully improve MHSU care and overall health outcomes across BC.



Born and raised in Vancouver, I have had the privilege of growing up near many beaches, forests, and mountains. Because of this, I enjoy spending my free time outdoors with a good book and delicious take-out from local food spots!

# Thalia Otamendi she/her

## Network Project Manager

I LIVE AND WORK ON THE UNCEDED AND TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF THE COAST SALISH PEOPLES, INCLUDING THE TERRITORIES OF THE X<sup>w</sup>MƏΘK<sup>w</sup>ƏYƏM (MUSQUEAM), SE<sup>l</sup>Í<sup>l</sup>WITULH (TSLEIL WAUTUTH), S<sup>k</sup>W<sup>x</sup>WÚ7MESH, (SQUAMISH), AND K<sup>w</sup>IK<sup>w</sup>Ə<sup>l</sup>ƏM (KWIKWETLEM) NATIONS. I ACKNOWLEDGE AND CONTINUOUSLY REFLECT ON THE FACT THAT I ENJOY MANY RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES THAT SOME INDIGENOUS PEOPLES WHO WERE HERE BEFORE ME ARE STILL NOT AFFORDED TO THIS DAY.



I started my role as a Project Manager at BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services in December of 2024 after completing my PhD. Through my studies, I developed knowledge in health services research, mixed-methods research, and patient-oriented knowledge translation. Prior to my research career, I worked in business operations at a national corporation.

My vision for the Network is to continue to identify knowledge/need gaps experienced by people with complex MHSU problems and the workforce that supports them. By prioritizing the voices of these knowledge users, we can better build products, policies, and programs that aim to improve health outcomes. I am particularly drawn to the opportunity to help build a community of practice, through which a diverse group of providers can learn from each other.



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I'm originally from Mexico and moved to Canada with my parents and siblings when I was younger. Although I miss the family, culture, and food we left behind, I have developed a deep appreciation for the green spaces and fresh air that Vancouver has to offer. I am in the mountains or forest as often as possible! My favourite local mountains are the Lions, known as Ch'íh'iyúy Elxwíkn ("Twin Sisters") in the S<sup>k</sup>w<sup>x</sup>wú7mesh (Squamish) language.