

Joint Message from the **President** and the **Executive Director**

Happy Fall Season!

There have been upside and downside of the COVID-19 pandemic that impact our lives. With the introduction of the vaccine and the reduction of confirmed cases for the vaccinated individuals, the death rate continues to be low and the recovery news are encouraging in all sectors. We have heard almost daily that mental health concerns and the demand for mental health services are rising. Hong Fook has diligently introduced our mandatory COVID-19 vaccine policy this October and continued to offer virtual and in-person care for clients and their family members.

On September 18, at our 2021 Annual General Meeting, a new board of directors was elected. Warmest welcome to Ramon Tam, one of our longest service volunteers to be our new Board President, together with him on the board are Janice Chu (VP), Winnie Tsang (VP), Eric Ngai (Treasurer), Hillson Tse (Secretary), and other board directors including Grace Kangmeehae Lee, Charles Xie, Jeffrey Kang, Gillian Gray, Carl Ching, Kevin Zhang and Sherman Hui. Congratulations to all the board members and thank you to the departing members Meilin Ma and John Park. Joint board

orientation was held on October 14, 2021. Many thanks to the planning committee consisting of Charles Xie, Katherine Wong, John Park and Warren Yu.

Together with Ramon, I am also pleased to share a few other exciting events hosted in the past few months. On September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the Group of three Hong Fook Organizations have jointly endorsed the Land Acknowledgement and all the Hong Fook staff attended an educational session on Indigenous Communities' history, culture and experience to recognize their struggles, challenges and sufferings as well as their successes and contributions. All staff were engaged in small group breakout sessions to exchange their respective experiences and learnings.

On October 5, due to the social restriction and space capacity limitation, the Association was only able to invite 15 guests to attend our Downtown new office house warming



Ribbon cutting for our new Downtown office by Bonnie Wong (Executive Director), Katherine Wong (NPLC Board President), Dr. Ted Lo (Asian Clinic Director and Foundation Board Director), and Ramon Tam (Association Board President) from left to right

We are proud to announce that the Association has already achieved 96% of the staff vaccination rate by mid-October. Dr. Ted Lo, Asian Clinic Director, was very kind to speak at our staff lunch and learn on how to manage anxiety towards health risks and the barriers to reduce vaccine hesitancy. Heartfelt thanks to Dr. Ted Lo for spending his valuable time with us.

party, which was lined up by the celebration of our Accreditation Primer Award, the launch of the Korean Community Needs Study and the Resource Guide, and the Bell cheque presentation ceremony.

In the upcoming months, the management team will be focusing on the pandemic recovery plan, the accreditation and quality improvement plan, the program and service expansion plan, the Finance, Human Resources and IT plans, as well as the risk management plans. Our board will also be occupied with the Accreditation Qmentum journey, Strategic Planning & Governance Review, Facility Development, and the 40th Anniversary Celebration activities. Please stay tuned.

Stay healthy, warm and safe!



2021 Annual General Meeting with the Board of Directors

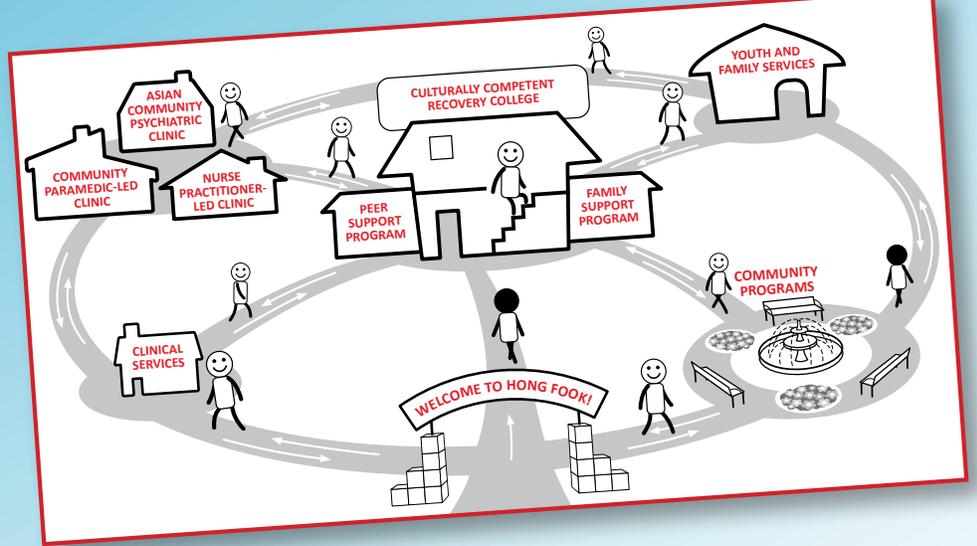
Culturally Competent Recovery College at Hong Fook

“an innovative and world leading means of providing culturally informed mental health education and support that fosters connection, hope and empowerment”

In the past few months, an evaluation team at Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores) with the collaboration of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) National, conducted a fidelity assessment of Hong Fook's Recovery College against established criteria developed by ImROC (Implementing Recovery Through Organizational Change). The evaluation methodology included conducting course observations, a document review, and distributing the RECOLLECT tool (a measure specifically designed to assess how closely a Recovery College maps on to our best understanding of an ideal Recovery College) to students, manager(s), and peer(s).

Recovery College is a mental health and well-being learning centre driven by peer education and principles of positive psychology. It is referred to by various names (e.g., Thrive Institute, Discovery Studio, etc.). The blend of personal and professional experience in mental health to co-produce courses and the college operation is what underpins the Recovery College. The College is open to everyone: those struggling with mental health challenges, those supporting a loved one with their mental health difficulties, and those seeking to improve their self-care and well-being (Perkins, Repper, Rinaldi, & Brown, 2012).

Our newsletter invites Hong Fook staff, volunteers, clients and family members to write a short article in their mother tongue. With the full launch of our Recovery College in Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese communities, the Peer Support Program, an important complement to our College, has also grown significantly, through co-delivering the Peer Support Training in partnership with Mood Disorders Association of Ontario (MDAO) to over 20 peers, providing 22 Peer Supporter placements to empower their roles in co-production process and peer support, and developing and facilitating nine Peer Support Groups. In this issue, Sandy Koo, one of our Peer Supporters, shared her co-production experience and reflection through her life journey.



Recovery College is based on a tested model from the United Kingdom since 2009, and established globally in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada.

Hong Fook's Recovery College began development in 2018 with the hiring of a Peer Coach and the implementation of training and education. In 2019, Hong Fook realized its Recovery College within the Cantonese Community becoming a culturally-specific college. This is impressive and noteworthy especially considering this type of mental health education and support is certainly endorsed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada's Recovery Oriented Practice Guidelines (MHCC, 2015). Hong Fook's Recovery College further evolved to include offerings for the Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese and Cambodian communities. The College now offers numerous courses (e.g., Recovery 101, Cantonese Writing and Multimedia, Pathways to Recovery, Body and Mind, Leisure Clubs like Tai Chi, etc.). Courses are available to adults within the Asian community and are situated in a community mental health service provider, and thus, is shared with other mental health and social care. Strength-based

language is explicitly used in the Recovery College and there is a focus on both being and belonging, along with becoming goal setting, and change.

Based on the evaluation and feedback received, the Recovery College at Hong Fook demonstrates strong recovery principles, conceptualized through the CHIME framework (connection, hope, identity, meaning, and empowerment). Continuing to build community partnerships to enhance co-production processes and community integration among students, along with seeking additional opportunities to promote social connectedness may enhance program delivery. Hong Fook's Recovery College and service delivery in general is a very innovative and world leading means of providing culturally informed mental health education and support that fosters connection, hope and empowerment.

The article is an excerpt from the Process Evaluation Report on Hong Fook's Recovery College by Ontario Shores's Recovery College Research Team (Simone Arbour and Katie David). If you are interested in accessing the full report, please contact Erica Wan, Lead, Recovery Programs, at ewan@hongfook.ca.

最近我和拍檔一同構思朋輩支援小組的活動時，有人提議我們可以問大家如果有機會的話他們希望成為誰人和認識誰呢？我覺得這個問題實在太好！透過真誠的對話，我們有機會更了解自己的需要和反思自我真性情。童年時，我看了一部外語片而想成為一名修女。這個念頭跟宗教完全無關因為我當時只是幾歲人仔。我其實是非常喜歡這個“行業”的整潔和裝扮。修女們似乎在面對所有事情時只要依規矩辦事便一定不會犯錯。我想媽媽亦一定會喜歡這個模樣的女兒吧！

事隔數十年後的今天，我對於當時這個念頭感到啼笑皆非。真實的生活體驗告訴我一般事情並不是非黑即白這麼簡單。在現實生活中，我們從各種不同的經歷中訓練出獨立思考，從而明白何謂是非對錯並能勇敢面對一時的不如意甚至錯敗。對我而言，有機會認識到很多人和事令生活變得有趣和珍貴。今時今日的我終於明白到我原來是一個需要突破和創作的人。隨著命運的帶領，我最終並沒有實現我人生中的第一個志願-修女。我欣賞和享受自己擁有起跌的人生。最後，我相信父母親大人更喜歡有我這個不太守規矩但懂得學習愛惜生命的女兒吧？！

Markham Youth and Family Hub Open House

written by Bernie Yeung,
Youth and Family Services

On October 16th, the Youth and Family Services team held an Open House at our Markham Youth and Family Hub (2665 Bur Oak Avenue). It was a fun-filled day with lots of food, games, and conversations where over 50 youth, families, volunteers and staff were finally able to get together and see each other in person after months of virtual meetings during the pandemic.

Youth and their families excitedly explored the Youth and Family Hub together - many for the first time - and saw where programs such as Youth Advisory Committee, Digital Storytelling Initiative, and Youth Drop-in would be held in-person in the near future. They also got a chance to learn more about upcoming services and programs, such as counselling, walk-in sessions, peer support groups, intergenerational programs, and creating a community mural.



The fun part started with sharing a delicious BBQ lunch together. Juicy hamburgers, hot dogs, snacks, and drinks were served to a ravenous reception. A photobooth was set up for attendees to capture special moments together and take home polaroids as keepsakes. The day was concluded with games and activities including a special Hong Fook-oriented trivia quiz and a ball toss. Attendees impressed with their knowledge, coordination, and teamwork. This successful gathering has made everyone leave with happy memories of the day while looking forward to what the future held in store for Hong Fook Youth and Family Services.



Upcoming Programs & Activities



Brief Counselling Service for Youth

During the pandemic, our Youth and Family team has observed common issues faced by youth and families, including managing symptoms of depression and anxiety, academic stress, and relationship problems. To support these needs, the team provides Brief Counselling Service for Asian identifying youth age 12 to 25 and their families living in the Greater Toronto Area through two streams of service, a single session counselling and a short-term counselling. The Service is offered in English, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Tagalog, and, coming soon, Vietnamese. We offer virtual counselling (video or phone) or in-person by appointment. To schedule your free session, please call 647-534-8493 or email counselling@hongfook.ca.

Monthly Wellness Seminars

Monthly Wellness Seminars are hosted in Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese on a range of topics promoting your physical health and mental wellness. Please check our monthly calendars on www.hongfook.ca/association and register accordingly. You can also find all recorded sessions on Hong Fook's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/c/hongfookmha/playlists>.

Holiday Celebration

Instead of hosting any in-person holiday celebration event, various Recovery and Community program groups are planning their virtual holiday celebrations. Follow up with your Mental Health Worker and/or Peer Supporter to find the event details.

NPLC Updates

Happy Mommies and Healthy Babies Weekly Group

Feeling tired about breastfeeding? We understand it is hard. Have you been thinking that cup of coffee to boost up your energy?

Here are a few reminders on breastfeeding and caffeine:

- Newborn babies and those under 6 months may be more sensitive to mom's caffeine intake.
- Time spent breaking down caffeine for different stages:
 - » Newborn: 2.7 to 5.4 days
 - » 3 to 5 months: about 14 hours
 - » 4 to 9 months: 3-7 hours
 - » Adult: 3-7 hours
- If mom avoided caffeine completely during pregnancy, baby can react more to the caffeine.

- As baby gets older, sensitivity tends to decrease since they are now able to break it down better.
- More than 750 mg per day can over stimulate the baby, who would show wide-eyed, active, alert baby who doesn't sleep for long, unusually fussy.
- Gradually cut back caffeine intake or stop for 2-3 weeks to see if there's improvements.
- It may take a few days to a week after mom eliminates caffeine for baby to improve.

It is important for mommies to also get enough rest and sleep especially during breastfeeding time. If you are tired, it may be a good idea to also nap when the babies are napping. It is an



important time for mommies to re-charge and rest. Mommies need to take good care of ourselves first before we can take good care of our babies.

Want to know more about happy mommies and healthy babies. Please join our Wednesday group, let us Growing Healthy Together. For details, please contact Joy Fang at jfang@hfchnplc.ca

Oct 3-9 is Mental Illness Awareness Week, a week of public education and awareness that encourages Canadians to learn about mental illness and share their experiences with it. It brings the reminder that in any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experiences a mental illness or addiction problem.

Canadian Mental Health Association shared in this year's message that symptoms of different types of mental illnesses are just one piece affecting people with mental illnesses. Access to services, support from loved ones, and the ability to participate in communities play a big part in the way people experience mental illnesses.

Currently the pandemic's strain on mental health is reaching an all-time high. Hong Fook has witnessed firsthand that there has been a substantial increase of service demands from our target communities. The timely access to culturally competent, quality and integrated mental health care needs to be addressed now more than ever.

In this year, thanks to all your continuous support to our Virtual Film Screening featuring "The World is Bright," to the 2nd Radiothon Fundraising Week with Singtao A1 Radio, and your ongoing donations,

- 55 more youth have accessed Walk-in or Short-Term Counselling Service from April to September compared with the same period of time in the previous year;
- nine Peer Support Groups have been developed for peers to meet, connect and find hope, and for 20 peer supporters to grow their leadership role while developing their readiness for employment;
- over 2,300 community members have been equipped with skills to stay resilient during the pandemic and have been communicated with best practices to cultivate health in a holistic way.

We know Thank You is never enough for your trust and commitment. We are proud to share the messages from our clients having been supported because of your generosity.

“ Winter is long in Canada, but I felt even longer this time since the pandemic. The cell phone provided by Hong Fook was a great help to me during the pandemic and brightened up my heart when it was delivered by my case worker in her gentle and welcoming voice.

During the pandemic, my case worker has been monitoring and looking after every part of me. I can share all the things I can't tell anyone else. Who can understand and see me better than her?! My family and friends will never be able to comfort and help me with such a sincere heart. Hong Fook's case worker solves all my problems with language, culture, and mental difficulties in immigrant life. I am really grateful to Hong Fook Mental Health Association for sending me an angel. ”

“ Sometime I feel my anti-depressant medicine slow down my brain. I am very grateful for Hong Fook to offer me a Peer Supporter placement. Through co-producing a Recovery College course and facilitating a weekly Peer Support Group, I make myself talk to people a lot and keep on improving my planning and organization skills, which has "reactivated" my brain. This placement also allows me to learn from Hong Fook's knowledgeable staff and to share my personal lived experience. It helps me gain a better vision of myself and have a better sense of contribution to other peers in our recovery journey. ”

“ Joining Hong Fook's Youth and Family Services has given me a safe space to talk and discuss about relevant issues impacting me and my friends currently. It is a nice, safe environment to talk about stuff that brings me down. It allows me to practice a lot of skills, such as public speaking, leadership, and event planning. I have learned a lot of cultural terms from other people and it helped strengthened family bonds. ”



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