

Speaker Series – Mental Health from Prevention to Wellness

February 27th, 2021

Legislation Committee Report

The CFUW Speakers Series was privileged to have Jennifer Ashawasegai-Pereira, an Anishinabek citizen from Henvey Inlet First Nation in Ontario speak to our group about her experience as an Indigenous woman diagnosed with bi-polar disorder over 20 years ago.

Jennifer was able to bring us her expertise in how her own mental health story involved engaging with her Indigenous Community and their traditions on her journey to wellness and wellbeing practices. She spoke of how traditional health practices can be brought in to intersect with the current western medicine methodologies to bring a more comprehensive approach to treating mental health amongst all people.

Jennifer also engaged our participants with her work as a helper in traditional indigenous ceremonies and how that has benefited her own wellness through connection to community. Jennifer remarked that traditional indigenous ceremonies have a role to play in assisting people “find their path to wellness, whether that be physical, mental, spiritual or emotional or all of it, and to assist people work through trauma.” The medicine wheel can also be utilized in helping people understand balance in their wellness journey as a means of paying attention to what makes up positive health in our physical bodies.

As part of our mental health, we need to pay attention to our intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical health as these components of who we are aren't in isolation to one another. Jennifer's words were a reminder that though we live in a culture in which our physical health is readily talked about we need to normalize talking about and seeking help with our mental health by allowing it more space to be talked about.
#RecoveryisPossible

Lisa Long,
Chair of Legislation Committee CFUW Ontario Council