

# Redefining Expert: Meaningfully Engaging People with Lived & Living Experience (PWLLE) into ECHO

*My name is Anita David. This is my journey out of darkness & into a life worth living.*



*As a person with lived /living experience (PWLLE) of MHSU, I have struggled in my life. No self-worth. No hope. No joy. I fought to find my value & my voice. Invisible. Not seen nor heard.*



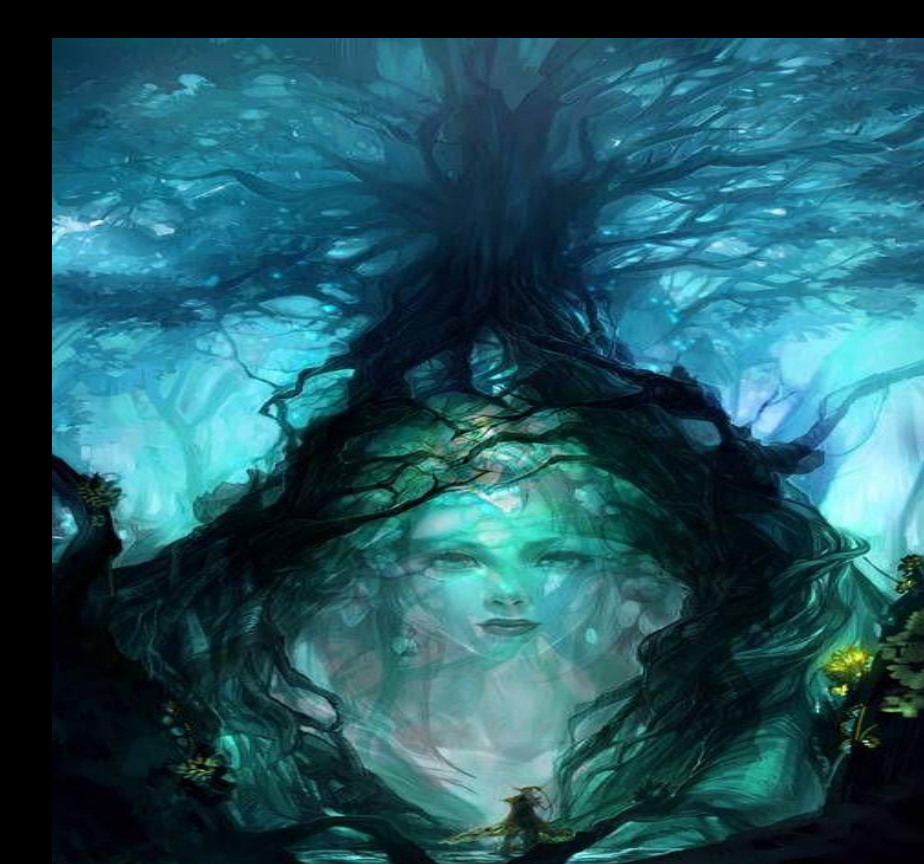
*I was in a constant battle with my mental health & trying to keep my demons from consuming me. I didn't think life could get worse until I faced the most intense time of my life less than 10 years ago.*



*I nearly died 3 times within 14 months. By my own hand, when I lost hope. By careless misuse of meds, aching for comfort. By a surgery which left me in a coma with months of complications.*



*Putting my life back together seemed insurmountable. No future. Only darkness. But knowing there had to be a reason why I was still alive. I desperately sought a way to move forward.*



*I got what I needed through some insightful advice: "Follow your values". Taking it to heart, I joined the 'Nothing About Us Without Us' movement as a patient partner on various projects.*



*I used my skills & experiences to create a successful career as an advocate, educator, facilitator, mentor, peer engagement advisor & community-based researcher.*



*In British Columbia, Canada, there is an MHSU crisis & despite best efforts, the needs of people with complex needs remain unmet. We need to be creative, courageous and bold.*



*Incorporating voices of PWLLE leads to better outcomes\*. As a patient partner & Lived Experience Strategic Advisor, I am embedded in decision making processes & champion change.*



*Our Lived Experience Partners & Advisors meet monthly to discuss issues of importance to them. Focus groups & community discussions help identify key needs & inform our ECHO topics.*



*As a Hub team member for the Provincial Mental Health & Substance Use ECHO. I offer perspectives of PWLLE to guide ECHO. I review didactic & case presentations to ensure language is person centered, trauma informed & respectful.*



*For the Fall 2022 Provincial MHSU ECHO series, I facilitated sessions & co-presented on trauma-informed care where I told my story of stigma, power & vulnerability that is not obvious to service providers.*



*In the Winter/Spring 2023 sessions, more PWLLE participated in and/or presented at the ECHO sessions ensuring the diversity of lived experience perspectives were represented.*



*Evaluation findings showed that co-presenting with a PWLLE sharing a personal story was impactful. The voices & perspectives of PWLLE should be included in all initiatives to facilitate systemic change.*



*Being immersed in every aspect of the Provincial MHSU ECHO has been extremely inspiring & profound. Through all my experiences, I no longer feel empty or invisible. I now feel seen and heard.*



***I have found passion & purpose.***

## Recommendations:

- *Include the voices of lived & living experience on your Hub team to collaborate on ECHO planning, case discussions & provide recommendations from their unique perspectives.*
- *Align with what is important to those with lived and living experience including how needs are not being met in services and then use this information to influence the planning of ECHO sessions.*



**Anita David**  
Lived Experience Strategic Advisor

BC Mental Health & Substance Use Services

[anita.david@phsa.ca](mailto:anita.david@phsa.ca)

PROVINCIAL  
MENTAL HEALTH AND  
SUBSTANCE USE

# NETWORK

### Acknowledgements:

I acknowledge, with gratitude, that my work takes place on the traditional, unceded territories of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Métis peoples and Inuit.

I acknowledge the inspiration, support and contribution from members of the Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Network (the Network), the Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use ECHO hub team and the lived experience strategic advisor and partners (LEAP) team.

Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use ECHO is funded by the Province of British Columbia and by the Health Canada Substance Use and Addiction Program (SUAP).

\*Swift, J. K., Callahan, J. L., Cooper, M., & Parkin, S. R. (2018) The impact of accommodating client preference in psychotherapy: A meta-analysis. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 74(11), 1924–1937. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22680>.

