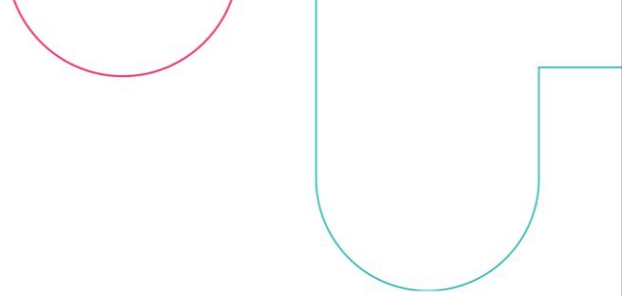


Transcript of Interview with Despina Papadopoulos

[00:05]

My name is Despina Parthena Papadopoulos, and I'm named after my great aunt Despina and my grandmother Parthena. And as you can tell from my very long last name, I'm of Greek ancestry, as both my parents were born and raised in Greece. I am a settler and a member of the Northern and Indigenous Health Team at the former legacy organization, the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, which we now call Healthcare Excellence Canada. And as part of the Northern Indigenous Health Team, I was brought in originally to support what we had called the Suicide Prevention Collaborative, which then became the Promoting Life Together Collaborative. Experiences with the Collaborative, one thing that I reflected on a lot is sometimes you don't know what you don't know. However, you can still spend the time to support your own learning and your own readiness by really taking the time to listen, to learn, to self-reflect, to unpack sometimes some of the biases that you may have and to really be mindful



And it is as important to develop relationships and trust within your own organization as it is to develop those relationships externally because you need organizational readiness, and that often means havin

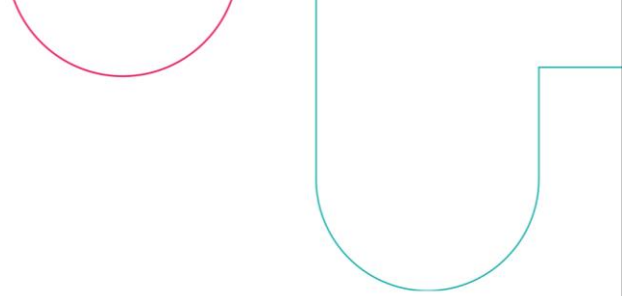
Building that level of readiness and understanding across the organization helps to enhance and develop infrastructures, including policies and protocols that you need in order to work in a good way.

[04:27]

The Promoting Life Together Collaborative brought together teams from coast to coast to support the development of meaningful partnerships between health organizations and Indigenous communities to develop life promotion initiatives. This was a 19-month initiative that supported learning and development of community partnerships, and there were six different teams from across northern and remote regions, including teams from British Columbia, Newfoundland, two teams for Manitoba, Ontario and Alberta. And as the convener of this initiative, our organization became the seventh team as it became very evident that we were also learning alongside all the teams. This initiative embraced and modelled codesign with Indigenous partners and included coaching and mentorship for the teams, and the design, delivery and evaluation of this collaborative was guided by a guidance group that included leaders, Elders, a youth representative, who have knowledge and expertise in Indigenous mental health and community wellness, suicide prevention and life promotion.

[05:52]

I have also learned is that it's actually not that hard to be relational and to take a holistic approach to learning and doing. However, what I think I've learned is that sometimes it's not necessarily the norm of how mainstream organizations work. And so because of that, when you try to work in that way, you'll find that sometimes you'll be questioned, and that it will take a lot of time for others in your organization to really understand that, and you'll also need to have really hard conversations, and sometimes you'll feel like you're being pulled in different directions. However, it's so important to stay on that path because not only do you have an incredible opportunity to support and perhaps being a bridge of being responsive and respectful of Indigenous ways of being and doing, you also have a really important responsibility and accountability to the work, to your relationships and to do things in a good way and then to hopefully make positive to support and help making positive system transformation. And so for me, the biggest thing is to kind of shift that mentality and to really focus on doing good, instead of looking good. We often had to loop back with our own internal comms team to ensure that anything that we produce is reviewed and at that time approved by our comms. And the guiding principles were co-developed not just with the guidance group but with the teams in the collaborative, and they are so foundational to ou



compensated in an appropriate time, why it's important to compensate Elders and spiritual advisors. And so there's a lot of conversation, a lot of time that you need to take to build those internal processes to support it. And sometimes you have hard conversations and sometimes they make you uncomfortable.

[12:00]

And while it may be hard sometimes to have conversations that will create discomfort, it is through those conversations that you will learn the most. These conversations often created learning opportunities for staff to unpack biases and to enhance cultural safety and humility. This also helped to develop and enhance infrastructures internally that were needed so that we can work in a respectful way that honours different worldviews. And this inevitably supported our organization's own journey towards truth and reconciliation.