



YouthCO welcomes our new Executive Director

VANCOUVER, June 23, 2016 - The YouthCO Board of Directors is pleased to welcome Sarah Chown to the role of Executive Director. "Following a thoughtful hiring process, the Board is confident in, and excited about, Sarah's capabilities to steward the organization forward," says Board Chair, Blake Stilis.

Sarah is no stranger to YouthCO. She first joined our team as Program Director in January 2015 to support our staff, our volunteers and our programs, and to engage our membership in advocacy efforts. **As Program Director, Sarah has focused on creating more spaces for leadership from youth living with HIV.** These initiatives include mentoring YouthCO's Positive Programs Intern, working with Oak Tree Clinic to offer social and educational programming, and leading Camp Moomba's programs. Sarah has also worked to foster a strong team of staff and volunteers in YouthCO's young gay men's program, Mpowerment. This work has helped to rejuvenate Mpowerment's peer-led approach to sexual health education and support, through weekly programming including our workshop series called Unmask.

Sarah brings a host of experience within the HIV and HCV sector to her role as Executive Director. Sarah's work has included LGBTQ+ youth programming and HIV/HCV education at HIV/AIDS Resources & Community Health (ARCH) in Guelph, Ontario, communications and health promotion for the Nunavut Department of Health and Social Services, and coordinating the Gay Poz Sex research project at Positive Living BC. This experience is complemented by education in public policy and public health with a focus on social inequities, and an interdisciplinary HIV fellowship through the Universities Without Walls program.

Sarah is passionate about peer education and support, and this passion is one of the reasons she loves getting to be at YouthCO every day. "YouthCO's strong culture of youth driven, anti-oppressive approaches to reducing HIV stigma is unique. Our commitment to these values make us a leader within the sector," said Sarah. "As Executive Director, I look forward to working with our staff and members to create more spaces for peer support by-and-for youth living with HIV." Our experiences at YouthCO continue to show, along with research evidence, that youth growing up with HIV, and youth experiencing a new HIV diagnosis benefit tremendously from community connection, highlighting the need for this continued work. This work is a natural extension of the provincial work of YouthCO's peer-led indigenous program, Yúsnewas, and the 20+ years of youth-driven HIV leadership at YouthCO.

"I am so grateful to be part of the YouthCO community! It is energizing to be connected to the many incredible members and staff who drive our approach to reducing HIV stigma throughout BC," said Sarah. "Our work today is possible because of the numerous young leaders who have shaped YouthCO since its founding in 1994, and the many organizations who have helped to support our work." Sarah will be transitioning into her new role effective July 11th. We hope you'll join us in welcoming Sarah as YouthCO begins this next exciting chapter!

Want to get in touch? Connect at www.youthco.org, on social media, or by calling at 604-688-1441.