

## DASH Attends *Balancing Our Minds* Event

*A conference about mental health dialogue for youth*

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014, DASH and [Healthy Living Youth Council](#) members attended ***Balancing Our Minds 2014: Tools for Youth Wellness***. The conference, in its second year, was organized by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services in partnership with the Vancouver Canucks. It was planned in collaboration with youth organizations that work in the area of mental health, and with youth who are passionate about breaking down barriers and creating connections.

The event provided a great opportunity for school-aged youth in BC to learn about mental health and engage in fun activities and thoughtful dialogue. The day featured numerous engaging presenters, each sharing a unique experience about struggles with mental health. Brent Seal and Sarah Irving, two Youth in Residence from [FORCE](#), facilitated the day. [Click here](#) to learn more about the FORCE Youth in Residence and their work at the [Kelty Mental Health](#) Resource Centre.

This year's event welcomed over 1500 people! Youth from across the province attended, while many others participated via webinar. The event strived to increase knowledge and awareness of mental health and substance use issues; enhance understanding of the spectrum of mental health challenges and mental wellness; increase awareness of available tools (such as [mindcheck.ca](#)), resources and services to promote and support mental health; and decrease stigmatizing attitudes and behaviours towards individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

Here are some of the reflections from HLYC members and one of DASH's HLYC Youth Facilitators:

*"Being able to attend the Balancing our Minds conference was amazing. Seeing how many students/youth got the opportunity to attend to this event, and seeing how engaged and excited they were, was really cool. I enjoyed learning about the different areas of mental health, and listening to the guest speakers was nice, it was very inspiring hearing all their stories."* – Jessica, HLYC member

*"One of my favorite moments at the Balancing Our Minds event was during the beginning of the day when walking around the booths. I was talking to one of the workers at the booths about my action project, when a health teacher joined into our conversation. We talked about how healthy eating and thinking is an important aspect of growing up, yet one does not want to "plant any seeds" in child's mind of what a healthy body image looks like, or what exactly someone with a healthy mind should be like. While talking to them, I realized that many of the other students attending this event had an interest in being healthy, and gaining knowledge about their mental health. Seeing all these other students, no different from me, be interested in their overall health and understand the importance of healthy living was the highlight of my day!"* – Mavis, HLYC member

*"The Balancing Our Minds Youth Summit was very inspiring. It helped me know that I wasn't alone in this concern for the mental health of others and of myself – and that there is no room for the stigma around it. The booths allowed me to create connections with organizations I would not have had the chance to meet otherwise. All of the speakers were incredibly inspiring, talking about their accomplishments and the problems they overcame."*  
– Tomas, HLYC alumni

*"I was thrilled to participate in the Balancing Our Minds event. It was great to connect with the HLYC network and I felt grateful for the support of current HLYC members and alumni – we were a team of seven spreading the word about Healthy Schools BC and the HLYC at the DASH table. I was excited to see so much enthusiasm about the opportunities available for students who are interested in getting involved in creating healthy schools. The biggest take-away for me was to see the goal to increase the size of the event actualized – and then some! Approximately 200 people were in attendance at last year's event and, at this year's 2nd annual event, the crowd was over 1500 people! This, and the fact that youth were engaged throughout the planning leading up to the event and on the day, are inspiring details I am eager to share about the experience!"* – Alea, HLYC Youth Facilitator