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For immediate release

Nanaimo to host panel of international experts on holistic mental health

Every day we hear of the epidemic of mental illness, and every day we hear that the only solution is treatment with drugs, drugs that have debilitating and sometimes deadly side effects. The pharmaceutical industry, and drug-based psychiatry, have left little room for other ways to look at and deal with severe emotional distress. Psychiatry has replaced the human connection – and the good that human approaches can bring – with medications that endanger patients and cut them off from genuine healing alternatives.

Proven alternatives to drug-based psychiatry do exist. Around the world, a range of projects are showing that even people in severe distress can be helped without drugs and without hospitalization. This May, INTAR, the International Network of Treatment Alternatives for Recovery, meets on Gabriola Island. The annual meeting of INTAR brings together some of the world's leading experts on alternatives to psychiatry to share ideas and plans about the innovative solutions they are practicing to promote medication-free recovery in the community.

As part of the annual meeting, which takes place from May 5 to 9, INTAR will hold a public panel in Nanaimo on alternatives to psychiatry. The panel will be held on May 9, at 6:00 pm, in room 203, building 355 of Malaspina University College. Panelists will include:

Laurie Ahern, moderator

Associate Director of Mental Disability Rights International, Ahern promotes human rights for psychiatric patients and people with intellectual disabilities in some of the world's most challenging situations. She is also a former director of the U.S. National Empowerment Center, an influential promoter of alternatives to psychiatry.

Ron Bassman, Ph.D.

A psychiatric survivor himself, Bassman is a psychotherapist and psychology instructor with a long history in private and hospital practice, self-help project development, and as a consultant to government agencies and educational institutions. He is co-founder and a board member of the Community Consortium, a New York NGO dedicated to promoting the full citizenship rights of people with mental disabilities who have been excluded from genuine participation in their communities.

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Bertram Karon, Ph.D.

Karon is a psychoanalyst and professor of psychology, and an established expert in using psychotherapy to treat schizophrenia. He is the author of over 150 publications and has won several academic awards for his humane approach to treatment of patients with severe mental illness.

Leon Redler, M.D.

Redler, a London-based colleague of the late Drs. R.D. Laing and Loren Mosher, co-founded alternative places of asylum for people in severe "mental" distress and continues to re-search and address the roots of suffering through the developing practice of Just Listening, ethical-deconstructive therapy, and other practices.

Voyce Hendrix, M.S.W.

A pioneer in practical alternatives to psychiatry, Hendrix has a four-decade career in working with those who suffer and experience alternative states of reality. He was director of Soteria House, the ground-breaking San Diego residential facility started by Dr. Loren Mosher in the 1960s. Hendrix has experience in state institutions, private hospitals, and community-support programs, and now practices in Wisconsin.

Gisela Sartori, M.A.

Sartori is the founder and former coordinator of the Second Opinion Society (SOS), a grassroots community organization offering non-medical alternatives to psychiatry, including a drop-in and resource centre. She is now in private practice in Nanaimo, working with people looking for alternatives to drug treatment.

Windhorse Associates

Windhorse Associates, with locations in Massachusetts, California, and Colorado, was started in 1981 by Naropa Institute to use East-West psychology and the integrated skills of mindful-awareness to assist people with mental disturbance. Windhorse's philosophy of healing includes mindful attention to body, mind, and environment, and the development of true compassion.

Panelists and other INTAR participants will be available for interviews on May 6 through 9, and in Nanaimo on May 9. For further information on the May 9 public panel, on the INTAR meeting, or on INTAR itself, contact Gisela Sartori at 250-247-9370, or e-mail info@intar.org.

This event is co-sponsored by the Liberal Studies Department of Malaspina University-College.