



## Kaj focuses on collaboration to advance mental health for Albertans



*In his free time, Kaj Korvela has a passion for art history and creating art, as well as serving as executive director of a mental health non-profit group.*

Building stronger partnerships between community, healthcare and government toward mental wellness for all Albertans has been a lifelong desire for Kaj Korvela, a founding member of the Addiction & Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council (AMH PAC).

“I’m interested in seeing mental health services become more community-oriented, with more engagement and support outside of traditional clinical settings,” he says. “The historical notion of mental health service provision is a clinical model, but I would like to see more collaboration between Alberta Health Services (AHS) and community-based services.”

For Kaj, his mission is personal, steeped in lived experience and the wisdom gained from living with bipolar disorder.

“I believe inclusion of people with lived experience is crucial for any kind of input. I had a hospitalization that changed the trajectory of my career and life and led to the loss of relationships. I recognized that other people experience the same thing, and this led me to my career in mental health,” says the Calgarian, who also serves as Executive Director of the Organization for Bipolar Affective Disorder (OBAD).

“Some people are surprised that I have bipolar disorder. People think, ‘You’re OK,’ and are surprised I have lived experience with mental health. People are often surprised by the level of function of people with moderate to severe mental health diagnoses.”

His desire to give back to Albertans through his advice and perspective also drives his wish to boost public awareness about the roles of PACs and Health Advisory Councils (HACs).

“PACs are places where people can be heard,” he says. “Community members sometimes feel marginalized, without a place to be heard. People have to be engaged in discussion around mental health and what they need in the community.”

In his free time, his passion for creating art and the study of art history fires up his imagination.

“I have a studio. I make art — paintings and other mediums. My background lies in art history and fine arts; it’s my passion.”

As well, Kaj enjoys the sights and sounds of new lands and people.

“I try to travel as much as I can. I generally go to big cities in the U.S. and Europe. I enjoy taking in the cultural sites and events.”

For more information on the Addiction and Mental Health Provincial Advisory Council, visit [ahs.ca/advisorycouncils](http://ahs.ca/advisorycouncils), or email [pac.amh@ahs.ca](mailto:pac.amh@ahs.ca).