

Bold Ideas Colloquium Speaker Series

Friday, October 9, 11:00 AM – NOON (SPECIAL TIME)

via Zoom at:

Zoom Link:

<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/67800647578?pwd=teqxzxHZfL7ROhSMussN8zpapM7QAY.1>



Reframing the Criminal Justice System as Public Health: What Would It Change?

***Jonathan Meikle**, Founder and Director of Strength in the Circle Inc. and a member of Norway House Cree Nation.*



***Maria Paula Godoy**, PhD Candidate, College of Community and Global Health (University of Manitoba)*

Abstract: The criminal justice system is a major site where population health inequities are produced, concentrated, and sustained. Communities disproportionately affected by criminalization

also experience high burdens of trauma, mental illness, substance use, infectious disease, and premature mortality. At the same time, criminal justice institutions routinely respond to health crises, manage populations with substantial health needs, and profoundly shape health outcomes. In this sense, the criminal justice system is already part of our public health infrastructure, even if it is rarely understood or governed as such. This talk asks: What would change if we understood the criminal justice system as part of the public health system? Bringing together perspectives from population health research, lived experience, restorative justice, and Indigenous and cross-cultural understandings of collective well-being, we consider how principles of prevention, harm reduction, trauma-informed practice, structural accountability, and attention to the social determinants of health might reshape how we understand and respond to harm. Reframing justice as public health also raises important tensions. Public health has its own histories of coercion, surveillance, colonialism, and unequal treatment. Rather than proposing that healthcare simply replace criminal justice, this talk asks what a system centred on prevention, accountability, safety, equity, and collective well-being might require.

Talk Learning Objectives: By the end of the session, participants will be able to: 1) Examine criminal justice involvement as both a determinant and an outcome of population health and health inequities; 2) Describe how prevention, harm reduction, trauma-informed practice, and attention to structural determinants could inform approaches to justice. 3) Identify both the possibilities and limitations of reframing criminal justice through a public health lens; and 4) Consider the implications of this reframing for policy, practice, and measures of success in Manitoba and beyond.

Speaker Biography **Jonathan Meikle** is the Founder and Director of Strength in the Circle Inc. and a member of Norway House Cree Nation. He works in restorative justice practice, community-based research, and systems transformation. Jonathan is a Veteran and has been recognized for his leadership and bravery through a Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal, and a Silver Medal of Bravery by the Royal Canadian Humane Association, and an Eagle Feather from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. **Maria Paula Godoy** is a PhD Candidate in Community Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba and a SSHRC Doctoral Fellow. Her research examines the intersection of mental health, justice, and public policy among immigrants using linked administrative data from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy. This talk draws on reflections from the Columbia University course Rethinking Criminal Justice as Public Health.