



For immediate release

Student-athletes, university sports conferences and Bell Let's Talk team up to grow the mental health conversation on Canadian campuses nationwide

- 20,000 student-athletes, the Atlantic, Québec, Ontario and Canada West university sport conferences, and 53 Canadian universities join forces for Bell Let's Talk Day, January 25
- 6 Academic All-Canadian student-athletes feature in Bell Let's Talk video series talking about mental illness and how to fight the stigma
- 100 university sports games across Canada to host Bell Let's Talk events

MONTREAL, January 10, 2017 – Bell Let's Talk, Canadian universities and Atlantic University Sport (AUS), Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec (RSEQ), Ontario University Athletics (OUA), and Canada West Universities Athletic Association (CWUAA) today announced a national student initiative to promote mental health on campuses across Canada.

On Bell Let's Talk Day this January 25, more than 20,000 student-athletes will help lead the campus conversation about mental health, joining with fellow students and others in the university community to discuss the impact of mental illness and how to fight the stigma that keeps too many from seeking help. Student-athletes are also hosting events at 100 university games leading up to January 25, and appearing in a new Bell Let's Talk video series.

"I'm ecstatic that student-athletes at campuses everywhere are coming together in such a huge way to drive the mental health conversation, sharing their stories and inviting their fellow students to join in making a difference," said Clara Hughes, Canada's 6-time Olympic medalist and Bell Let's Talk national spokesperson. "Athletes are deeply involved in campus life and passionate about their school communities, and I offer my heartfelt thanks to them all for bringing their incredible energy and ideas to the mental health cause."

"On behalf of the regional university sports conferences across Canada – the RSEQ, OUA, CWUAA and the AUS – we congratulate our student-athletes for leading the way," said Phil Currie, Executive Director of Atlantic University Sport. "They'll be spreading the mental health message at campuses across Canada, sparking conversations with fellow students and offering their own perspectives on how we can all make a positive change."

"The Bell Let's Talk partnership with Canadian universities has grown from 11 schools in Atlantic Canada in 2016 to 53 right across the country this year, from 2,200 student-athletes to more than 20,000," said Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell Let's Talk. "Conversations will be taking place in classrooms, residences and sport facilities on campuses across the country, helping combat the stigma and supporting those who struggle. We look forward to the continued growth of this great initiative in the years to come."



Leading up to January 25, 100 university sports games across the country will host Bell Let's Talk events. Fans will receive thunder sticks and temporary tattoos and have the opportunity to sign talk bubbles and banners in support of mental health. Fans are also encouraged to take pictures and share on social media on Bell Let's Talk Day to support Canadian mental health and drive Bell's funding for mental health programs.

Fighting the stigma: Student-athlete video series

Student-athletes from across the country have also produced a series of videos based on the [5 simple ways to help end stigma around mental illness](#). Videos featuring participants from each of the regional university sports conferences will be released tomorrow, January 11. To learn more, please visit Bell.ca/OneTeam.

To kick off the series, 6 Academic All-Canadian student-athletes share their experiences in the first video, *Let's Talk About It*, recorded this fall in Ottawa:

"Mental illness has impacted my life in various ways. Personally, I struggled with anxiety in my first couple years of university – just trying to manage all the performance demands both academically and in my sport. Later on, I found out that I had a lot of teammates dealing with various mental illnesses. It is definitely something people hide and are afraid to express especially among their teammates."

Rebecca Terejko, Swimming, University of British Columbia

"I think the difficulty is that the problem is invisible, you can't see it, but if we talked about it we could see the problem and people would know they're not alone."

Francois Jarry, Cross Country/Track and Field, McGill University

"Being a student-athlete, you can have the best times and you can have some of the worst times because there is so much emotion and passion involved with it. So it's important to check in with your teammates and friends. It's an easy way to just talk about it in a casual setting because it should be easy, it should be something we can just have a conversation about without there being a huge stigma associated with it."

Elenor Henry, Soccer, Mount Allison University

"Knowing there are other people going through the same situations and dealing with the same problems, really makes people feel comfortable to seek the help they need so they can try to get better and back to where they were."

Geoff Schemitsch, Hockey, Acadia University

"I think it's important for student-athletes to talk about mental health because it creates an open dialogue that builds understanding and compassion between peers and allows you to develop a better relationship with people who are in need of help."

Cindy Nelles, Rugby, McMaster University



“It’s tough to keep things in and all of that will just build up, so having that outlet to talk to somebody is going to be very beneficial.”

Chad Bush, Soccer, University of British Columbia

Participating Universities:

AUS: Acadia University, Cape Breton University, Dalhousie University, Memorial University, Mount Allison University, Université de Moncton, University of New Brunswick, Saint Mary’s University, University of Prince Edward Island, St. Francis Xavier University and Saint Thomas University.

RSEQ: Bishop’s University, Concordia University, McGill University, Université de Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke, Université du Québec à Montréal.

OUA: Algoma University, Brock University, Carleton University, University of Guelph, Lakehead University, Laurentian University, Wilfrid Laurier University, McMaster University, Nipissing University, University of Ottawa, Queen’s University, Royal Military College, Ryerson University, University of Toronto, Trent University, UOIT, University of Waterloo, Western University, University of Windsor and York University.

CWUAA: University of Alberta, Brandon University, University of British Columbia, UBC Okanagan, University of Calgary, University of Fraser Valley, University of Lethbridge, MacEwan University, University of Manitoba, Mont Royal University, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Regina, University of Saskatchewan, Thompson River University, Trinity Western University, University of Victoria and University of Winnipeg.

Bell Let’s Talk Day

On January 25, Bell will donate 5 cents to Canadian mental health programs for each of these interactions at no extra charge to participants:

- Every text message, mobile and long distance call made by Bell Canada and Bell Aliant customers.
- Twitter: Every tweet using #BellLetsTalk
- Facebook: Every view of the Bell Let’s Talk Day video at [Facebook.com/BellLetsTalk](https://www.facebook.com/BellLetsTalk)
- Instagram: Every post using #BellLetsTalk
- Snapchat: Every use of the Bell Let’s Talk Snapchat geofilter

Bell Let's Talk Day 2016 set new records with 125.9 million messages of support, growing Bell's funding for Canadian mental health by \$6,295,764.75. #BellLetsTalk was the #1 Twitter hashtag in Canada for all of 2016, and the most used in the world on Bell Let's Talk Day 2016.



With its original anchor donation of \$50 million and the results of the first 6 Bell Let's Talk Days, Bell's total commitment to mental health now stands at \$79,919,178.55, and is expected to surpass \$100 million in 2020. To learn more, please visit Bell.ca/LetsTalk.

Atlantic University Sport

Atlantic University Sport is responsible for governing interuniversity sport in Atlantic Canada. The conference is comprised of 11 member institutions and over 2,000 student-athletes who compete annually for 18 conference championships in 10 different sports, including basketball, cross country, football, hockey, rugby, soccer, swimming, track & field, volleyball & curling. It is the mission of Atlantic University Sport to enhance the educational experience of students in university through sport programs offered by member institutions working in partnership. To learn more, please visit Atlanticuniversitiesport.com.

Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec

The RSEQ (Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec) works to promote and develop sports and physical activity among students, from beginners to high-level sports. It therefore promotes academic success through sport. To learn more, please visit RSEQ.ca.

Ontario University Athletics

Ontario University Athletics (OUA) and its 20 member institutions are developing Champions For Life. Giving 9,000 student-athletes the opportunity to excel academically and on the playing field, while preparing for life after university. To learn more, please visit OUA.ca.

Canada West Universities Athletic Association

Canada West is the premier athletic conference in the country and is home to champion student-athletes that excel on the field, in the classroom and in their communities. Canada West and its 17 member institutions commit to a student-athlete experience where competitive excellence, scholarship and sportsmanship contribute equally towards moulding outstanding graduates and community leaders. To learn more, please visit Canadawest.org.

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