

# Applying a Holistic and Collective Lens to Working With South Asian Communities



**Presenters:**  
**Anita Lal**, Co-Founder and Director, Poetic Justice Foundation  
**Dr. Daljit Gill-Badesha**, Executive Director, SACH South Asian Community Hub  
**Gary Thandi**, Executive Director, Moving Forward Family Services  
**Kiran Malli**, Board President, Seva Foundation



### Safe, Accepting, Compassionate & Holistic

We provide multi-sectoral and collaborative interventions designed to offer wrap-around, family-centred and holistic services for South Asians. Through a low-barrier, culturally and linguistically appropriate approach, our services are centralized to help identify individual needs, advocate for clients and their families, and connect them to health and social services. We are mobile and multi-lingual, providing rapid risk mitigation to address clients' immediate and long-term needs.



**Provide accessible counselling across Canada to under-served communities.** We have 150 supervised unpaid student therapists across the country, 30 experienced clinical supervisors to support them, and 200 alumni who value the agency's mission and offer sliding-scale support for anyone who cannot afford traditional costs for therapy. We served 22,000 counselling and support sessions in over 30 languages across Canada last year with 100000+ sessions since 2015 to clients who otherwise would have fallen through massive service gaps.



Through Seva Thrift Store, we provide a vehicle for the South Asian community to adopt sustainability practices. We also aspire to establish and advocate for programming and services to address health inequities experienced by women from marginalized groups, focusing on immigrants and refugees, by considering and addressing the broader social determinants of health.

### WHY Wraparound and Collaborative?

Why is a wrap-around and collaborative approach necessary for South Asian individuals and families:

- Recognizes that the range of services needed including food insecurity, housing insecurity, racism, oppression, mental health and substance use do not just impact the individual, but also their family and extended family
- The family may be a part of the client's recovery/healing and serving the entire family unit can help create safety
- Clients tell us they feel overwhelmed and even re-traumatized when they have to retell their stories to various service providers. By working collaboratively and with client consent, we can greatly reduce the number of times they must do this
- Working together can support small organizations to share basic costs (i.e. infrastructure support) which means more funding goes directly to client services
- Enables effective outreach (e.g. we each take turns hosting various tables in communities and share information on each of our agency programs)
- We learn from our clients, enabling our organizations to take an integrated and holistic approach
- Our unified voice can also draw greater attention to the needs of the communities we work with, and that amplifies our voice when it comes to funding/donations
- Moves organizations away from a competitive to collaborative mindset - creates models for what is possible when we can see beyond our own needs to center the communities' needs
- **Our innovative approach develops new pathways of working that serve our community needs**



**Empower People, Demand Justice.**  
 Working towards a better world, we confront systemic injustices, amplify marginalized voices, and fight for equity. Our mission is to create lasting change through advocacy, education, and community mobilization.

### Systemic Solutions

- **Inter-agency collaboration** shifts how care is provided and creates space to work between organizational boundaries
- Current systems of care are individualistic and South Asian communities are **collectivist and family-oriented**
- Traditional (White/Colonial) systems are entrenched and overwhelmed. Our approach is **innovative, equitable,** and redefines systemic options