

The Power of Storytelling
Cross Insurance Center, Bangor Maine
Thursday, April 10, 8-3:30

Welcome to Maine's 19th Annual Comprehensive Sexuality Education Conference!

We won't belabor you with what you already know; it has been, and will continue to be, a tough time for all of us. But that you - educators and youth-serving professionals of all kinds - committed to joining us today to ensure the community members you serve are continuing to receive quality, comprehensive education means so much.

This year our theme is The Power of Storytelling. We know that stigma lives in the dark; there could not be a better time to shed some light on our identities, experiences, and knowledge to uplift all of our neighbors. Today, you'll learn the techniques and skills to bring back to the young community members in your schools, organizations, and homes to help them find their own voices and tell their own stories. Together we'll paint a broader picture of who we were, who we are, and who we can be.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for all that you do. We look forward to a day of learning and fun with you!

In solidarity,

Anna, Lynne, Lynette, Maddy, and Victor, *Maine Family Planning*

Conference Planning Team:

Aspen Ruhlin, *Mable Wadsworth Center*

Daniel Norwood, *Caring Unlimited*

Gabe Smith, *New Beginnings*

Jennifer McCann, *LCSW*

Karin Heim, *OUT Maine*

Kate Turpen, *Disability Rights Maine*

Lisa Råvar, *Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault*

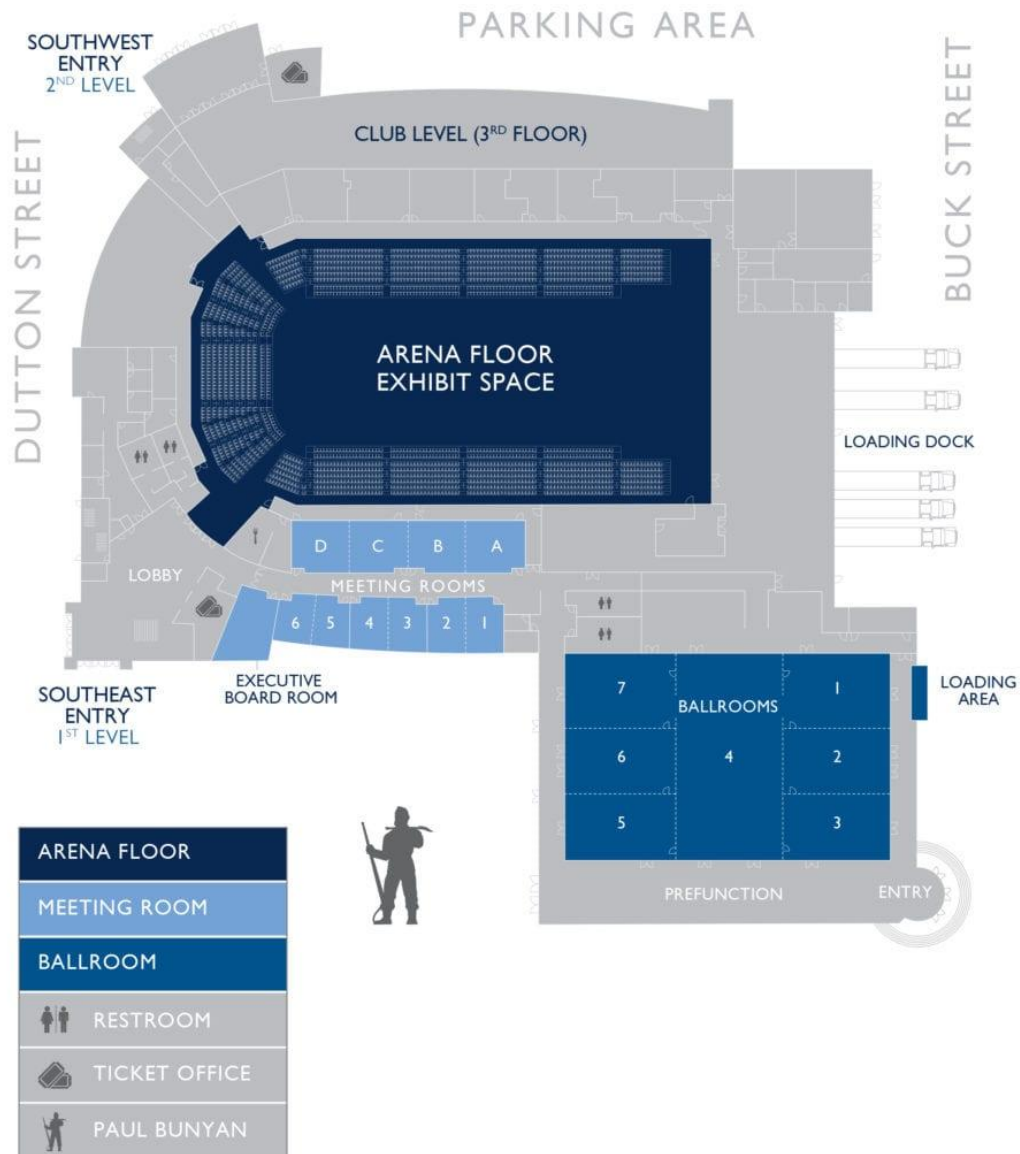
Kim Gosselin, *Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention*

Olivia Friday Loneman, *Planned Parenthood of Northern New England*

Susan Berry, *Maine Department of Education*

Agenda, at a glance

- 8:00-8:30, Registration
- 8:30-9:30, Welcome & Morning Plenary
- 9:30-10:15, Exhibit Tables & Networking
- 10:15-11:30, Workshops - Session 1
- 11:30-12:00, Lunch
- 12:00-12:30, Awards Presentation
- 12:30-1:45, Workshops - Session 2
- 1:45-2:15, Exhibit Tables & Networking
- 2:15-3:15, Afternoon Plenary
- 3:15-3:30, Conference Closing & Door Prizes



Award Recipients

- Rising Star: Alex Johnson, *Trenton Elementary School*
- Significant Contribution: Karyn Bussell, *Skowhegan Area Middle School*
- Community Star: Kate Turpen, *Disability Rights Maine*
- Community Pillar Award: The New School, *Kennebunk*

Exhibitors

- Caring Unlimited
- Disability Rights Maine
- Hardy Girls, Healthy Women
- Mabel Wadsworth Center
- Mad Hatter Wellness
- Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
- Maine Department of Education
- Maine Family Planning
- Maine Women's Lobby
- New Beginnings
- OUT Maine
- Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
- Speak About It
- The Telling Room

Sponsors

- Maine Department of Health and Human Services
- Maine Department of Education
- Maine Health Access Foundation
- New Beginnings

Workshops & Plenaries

Morning Plenary (8:45-9:30)

The Power of Storytelling

The Telling Room

The Telling Room shares a deep dive into the how's and why's of storytelling, specifically around the charged topics of identity and sexuality, and how to create a sense of safety in order for stories to be shared.

Morning Workshops (10:15-11:30)

Supporting Health Sexuality & Boundaries for Young People with Disabilities (Room A)

Kate Turpen (they/them, Disability Rights Maine), Aydan Rudolph (he/they, Disability Rights Maine, Katie Thune (she/her, Mad Hatter Wellness)

People with intellectual disabilities are SEVEN TIMES more likely to experience sexual assault than those without disabilities. We also know that people with disabilities are social beings and want to have intimate relationships and friendships. However, there remains a gap in comprehensive, quality sex education for youth with disabilities. In this session, participants will learn about why it is important to teach sexuality education to young people with disabilities. The presentation will cover what topics should be addressed and explore a variety of instructional methods to implement in meaningful and interactive ways.

One of the delivery methods that will be highlighted is the Empowered Together curriculum created by Mad Hatter Wellness. This program uses a co-facilitation model with a trained self-advocate peer educator alongside a professional. You will hear from Disability Rights Maine trainers who are currently applying this model to classrooms in Southern Maine. You will leave this presentation with tips, tools, and resources to use with the people in your life that you support.

Truth-Telling in Creative Writing: Using Poetry and Fiction to Tell Charged Stories (Room B)

Marjolaine Whittlesey (she/her, The Telling Room), Rylan Haynes (they/them, The Telling Room)

Join this interactive session to learn how the Telling Room approaches working with youth to tell their stories, with a particular look at stories of identity and sexuality. We will explore how to tell, write, and share stories from a place of power and creative joy, even when dealing with emotionally charged subjects. Through activities, conversations, and reading student writing, participants will experience the value and power of finding the stories you

want to tell, and learn ways to accompany and support youth through that very process. Participants will also leave with curriculum and mentor texts that they can use in their programs with youth of all ages.

Woli Pomushe - Walking in a Good Way (Room C)

Lynn Mitchell (she/her, Maine Indian Education), Juanita Grant (she/her, Maine Family Planning)

Attendees will participate in a smudging ceremony with traditional songs. Introductions will then be followed by educational teachings through storytelling. Attendees will hear the positive outcomes for students who are going back to their traditional teachings. Self Confidence, Self Love, Positive future outcomes.

Your Stories Matter (Room D)

Oronde Cruger (he/him, Speak About It), Olivia Harris (she/they, Speak About It)

Speak About It uses storytelling in all our work. We tell true stories in a few of our programs to show the range of lived realities around gender, sexuality, romantic attraction, friendship, and other topics. We are excited to invite participants to join us in exploring how storytelling can be an impactful tool in sex education. We will talk about the best practices for telling a clear story, demonstrate a storytelling exercise and share tools for educators to frame and tell personal stories in a way that feels safe and effective for all involved.

Afternoon Workshops (12:30-1:45)

Changing the Narrative: The Power of Storytelling to Push Back on Stereotypical Masculinity (Room A)

Mark Priceman (he/him, Maine Boys to Men), Sarah Brajtbord Fahey (she/her, Maine Boys to Men)

Stories are a powerful way to connect about shared struggles, challenge harmful stereotypes, and plant seeds about what healthy masculinity can look like. Stories provide an avenue to share points of connection across all of our human emotions. Whether we are facilitators sharing our own stories or drawing them out from participants in our workshops, we recognize the incredible potential of stories to reduce feelings of isolation and enable connection and empathy.

Culturally Relevant Communication: Bridging Gaps Between Parents, Youth, and Educators (Room B)

Choukri Mahamoud (Empowered Immigrant Women Unite!), Shadia Abdulahi (Empower Immigrant Women Unite!)

This workshop aims to explore effective communication strategies that promote understanding between parents, youth, and educators while respecting cultural values. It addresses the challenges of cross-generational dialogue, cultural barriers in education, and ways to navigate sensitive topics, such as reproductive health, with cultural awareness.

Unpacking Media Messages on STIs and HIV (Room C)

Maddy Magnuson (they/them, Maine Family Planning)

Media is a powerhouse for shaping how we see the world—but what does it say about STIs and HIV? In this interactive workshop, we'll dive into a selection of TV shows, documentaries, and ads that tackle these important topics. Together, we'll break down the messages, uncover myths, and identify the knowledge gaps hidden in these media portrayals. You'll have the chance to explore how media influences sex education, and walk away with a collection of hand-picked video clips you can use in your classroom to talk about STIs, and the emotions people may have around them. Ready to flip the script on how we talk about sexual health? Let's explore together!

Utilizing Poetry to Encourage Consent and Pleasure (Room D)

Lynne Schmidt (they/them)

Poetry is often able to say and express things we are unable to. For survivors of sexual violence, reconnecting with their bodies can be difficult. This workshop will explore poetry as a means to explore our stories, our own bodies, consent, desires, good and pleasurable sex, and healing.

Afternoon Plenary (2:15-3:15)

Now What? Moving Forward with Momentum

Speak About It

After a day of sharing, learning, and listening, it is easy to feel unclear on what do we actually do next. Join Speak About It for a closing session that will offer some suggestions for how to pull those thoughts together for some potential action that can move your work forward and keep the momentum of an exciting day together. We will combine helpful hints from anecdotes across our 15 year history with 700,000 students with interactive moments for the audience to try to tap into the wealth of experience and expertise in the room.

Presenter Bios

Morning Plenary Presenters

The Power of Storytelling

- Marjolaine Whittlesey (she/her, The Telling Room)
 - Marjolaine grew up in France and came to Maine to go to College of the Atlantic where she focused on literature, ecology, and performing arts. Her innate love of teaching quickly took over and for the past twenty years she has taught French, theater, and creative writing to students of all ages. Her creative work in theater mostly centered around new work and physical theater. As Education Manager at The Telling Room she continues to teach all ages, empowering youth to find the stories they want to tell, and helping adults accompany them. She loves collaborating with passionate artists and educators who invite students to trust their voice.
- Rylan Hynes (they/them, The Telling Room)
 - Communications & Editorial Director Rylan Hynes studied creative writing, visual art, and theatre at College of the Atlantic as an undergraduate. Rylan has worked with independent bookstores and nonprofits across the country, including Maine's own Nonesuch Books, Chicago's celebrated Women & Children First, and poetry press Alice James Books. Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance (MWPA) has awarded Rylan with a 2020 Martin Dibner Fellowship, a 2022 Lit Fest Fellowship, and they are a member of MWPA's Community Advisory Board. Rylan and their work were recently a finalist for the 2024 Maine Chapbook Series, Tin House's 2024 Trans Writers Residency, and longlisted for The Masters Review's 2023 Novel Excerpt Contest. In 2024, Rylan was a writer-in-residence at Monson Arts and they will be a participant in the 2025 Tin House Winter Online Workshop. When they aren't busy writing, Rylan enjoys spending time with their spouse, making art, and gardening.

Morning Workshop Presenters

Supporting Health Sexuality & Boundaries for Young People with Disabilities

- Kate Turpen (they/them, Disability Rights Maine)
 - Kate comes to Disability Rights Maine from the public education world, having worked as a school counselor for several years. Kate holds a Master's degree in School Counseling from the University of Vermont and specializes in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Educating youth about the intersection of identity and civil rights through high engagement, authentic connection, and

active participation has been the highlight of their career. Since 2021, Kate has been implementing high quality puberty education but has noticed a gap in this instruction for students with disabilities. After partnering with Katie Thune of Mad Hatter Wellness in early 2024, Kate has been bringing their engaging teaching style and necessary sexual health content into special education classrooms around Southern Maine.

- Aydan Rudolph (he/they, Disability Rights Maine)
 - Aydan is a recent Bangor High School 2023 graduate. Through their personal experience with disability, he is looking forward to connecting with and helping young people express themselves as a Self-Advocate Trainer. In 2024, Aydan began to specialize in teaching healthy relationships, body rights, and sexual wellness to help students learn to protect themselves and keep their bodies safe and healthy. While Aydan has felt the stigma that youth with disabilities should be non-sexual or uninterested in romance, Aydan is here to interrupt that narrative!
- Katie Thune (she/her, Mad Hatter Wellness)
 - For the past 25 years, Katie has worked with children and adults, both with and without disabilities. In her many years working as a school teacher in Saint Paul Public Schools, her most rewarding work was helping children reach their fullest potential, whether helping a child join Special Olympics, teaching a student mindfulness techniques to use at home, or empowering a student to successfully consent in their life. She has her Teaching License in Health Education, and Special Education K – 12, as well as her MA in Education: Developmental Disabilities. She started Mad Hatter Wellness 13 years ago with the mission of envisioning a world that provides and promotes equitable health and wellness education for all people. Katie has extensive experience in curriculum writing and training on relationships and sexuality education for people with disabilities and their support systems.

Truth-Telling in Creative Writing: Using Poetry and Fiction to Tell Charged Stories

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- Rylan Hynes (they/them, The Telling Room)
 - Communications & Editorial Director Rylan Hynes (they/them) studied creative writing, visual art, and theatre at College of the Atlantic as an undergraduate. Rylan has worked with independent bookstores and nonprofits across the country, including Maine's own Nonesuch Books, Chicago's celebrated Women & Children First, and poetry press Alice James Books. Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance (MWPA) has awarded Rylan with a 2020 Martin Dibner Fellowship, a 2022 Lit Fest Fellowship, and they are a member of MWPA's Community Advisory Board. Rylan and their work were recently a finalist for the 2024 Maine Chapbook Series, Tin House's 2024 Trans Writers Residency, and longlisted for The Masters Review's 2023 Novel Excerpt Contest. In 2024, Rylan was a writer-in-residence at Monson Arts and they will be a participant in the 2025 Tin House Winter Online Workshop. When they aren't busy writing, Rylan enjoys spending time with their spouse, making art, and gardening.

Woli Pomushe - Walking in a Good Way

- Lynn Mitchell (she/her, Maine Indian Education)
 - Lynn Amakehs Mitchell - Utkomoss Cihpolakon- Crow Clan is a Passamaquoddy Educator and Drummer. Employed by Maine Indian Education and teaches the Passamaquoddy Culture and Language at Calais High School. She works with all ages from Pre-K to Adult in both in-person and virtual teachings throughout Maine, Canada and England. She is a member of the Sipayik Women's Drum Group – Cipelahq Ehpicik, where she says "We use our songs and drums for the healing of our people". This year is the beginning work with ceremony for the boys and girls in both Sipayik and Motahkomikuk. She is this year's 2024 recipient of the NIEA (National Indian Education Association) Community service award for her lifelong commitment and dedication to her community. The ancestors guide her heart, mind and soul in everything she does. She is dedicated to uplifting the spirits of the Wabanaki people through her kindness, love and teachings. They will experience the truths behind who the Passamaquoddy are as a people and the takeaways will be a few lesson plans that they can do with their students.
- Juanita Grant (she/her, Maine Family Planning)

- Juanita Grant- Associate Director of Wabanaki Engagement for Maine Family Planning (MFP) works to reduce barriers and make connections through the lens of reproductive justice. She has passionately served as an advocate in Wabanaki communities for more than 20 years in positions such as case manager, interviewer, and community organizer. Juanita herself is Passamaquoddy and feels honored to work for, and on behalf of, Wabanaki people. While at MFP, she has assessed community and individual needs, distributed supplies, co-taught parent sex ed., and connected individuals to resources. She enjoys spending time with her family, growing food, kayaking, and playing with the dogs.

Your Stories Matter

- Oronde Cruger (he/him, Speak About It)
 - Oronde went from a student advisor for the program that became Speak About It to Executive Director for the organization. He got a neuroscience degree from Bowdoin College where he studied learning & memory alongside hormones & behavior, his studies & deep love for facilitating tough talks has served him well helping people try to better understand the complexities of intimacy. His experiences helped to inform his 2018 TEDx talk about redefining masculinity & the pivotal role of vulnerability.
- Olivia Harris (she/they, Speak About It)
 - Olivia uses interactive theatrical tools to create conversations about consent, boundaries, and healthy relationships all across the world. She has worked as a theatre educator and program manager with the Harlem Children's Zone, Drew University, Bond Street Theatre, and the Philadelphia Theatre Company. While at Drew, Olivia co-designed curriculum that trained students to use applied theater techniques to combat sexual violence on their campus. Students under their mentorship at the Philadelphia Theatre Company led healthy relationship workshops throughout the city. Ask them what they're reading (if you want a brief lecture)!

Afternoon Workshop Presenters

Changing the Narrative: The Power of Storytelling to Push Back on Stereotypical Masculinity

- Mark Priceman (he/him, Maine Boys to Men)
 - Mark has worked at Maine Boys to Men for two years and has facilitated programs to youth and adults of all genders from ages 10-80. Mark is responsible for planning and organizing MBTM's Training Institutes that are

held all over the state of Maine and Massachusetts. He manages and co-facilitates the Men Connect for New Mainers program with immigrants and asylum seekers in Portland and Saco, and also provides administrative support for the Boot Camp for New Dads Program. Mark collaborated with Birth Roots to launch "Talking Dads", a program for fathers which he facilitates monthly.

- Sarah Brajtbord Fahey (she/her, Maine Boys to Men)
 - Sarah is deeply committed to supporting young people to recognize their power, discover their passions, and build the relationships needed to work together to create change. Sarah served as the U.S. Programs Manager and Camp Director of Seeds of Peace for 8 years. Recognizing that working with young people is a privilege and responsibility that demands accountability to one's own learning process, Sarah joined the YES! Jam community in 2015 and is an organizing member and facilitator of both the North America Leadership Jam and Northeast Changemakers Jam. During the pandemic, Sarah helped to organize a powerful mutual aid project with Presente! Maine that delivered fresh, culturally relevant food to more than 500 families across Southern Maine every week for two years. She also helped to co-create Raise Your Voice Labs, a creative culture transformation company that combines the power of music and group facilitation. Sarah strives to lead a life of deep curiosity, joy, and authentic presence, finding strength in her beloved communities and continuously working to deepen her understanding of the complex systems around her.

Culturally Relevant Communication: Bridging Gaps Between Parents, Youth, and Educators

- Choukri Mahamoud (she/her, Empowered Immigrant Women Unite!)
 - Choukri is the Executive Director of Empowered Immigrant Women Unite (EIWU). She has over a year and a half of experience working at Lewiston Middle School. With a strong commitment to sexual and reproductive health education, she advocates for culturally responsive approaches that empower immigrant communities to access essential health services and make informed decisions. EIWU leads initiatives focused on maternal health, family planning, and reproductive rights, ensuring that immigrant women receive the knowledge and support they need. Passionate about breaking barriers and reducing stigma, Choukri actively engages in community outreach, education, and advocacy to promote health equity and reproductive justice for all.

- Shadia Abdulahi (she/her, Empower Immigrant Women Unite!)

Unpacking Media Messages on STIs and HIV

- Maddy Magnuson (they/them, Maine Family Planning)
 - Maddy is a Prevention Coordinator at Maine Family Planning. Maddy's work is all about modernizing the way we teach sex ed—they create fresh curricula, lead professional development sessions, and bring engaging youth sex education throughout Maine. Maddy has a knack for using pop culture clips—like moments from Netflix's Wednesday or Disney's Encanto—to make topics like healthy relationships and boundaries feel more relatable and real. Their approach shows how media can be an exciting, thought-provoking tool to explore values, beliefs, and important information, all while keeping the conversation fresh and engaging.

Utilizing Poetry to Encourage Consent and Pleasure

- Lynne Schmidt (they/them)
 - Lynne (LCSW) is the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor, and a therapist with a focus in trauma and healing. They obtained their Masters of Social Work in 2020 from the University of New England with Trauma Informed and Emotion Focused Therapy-1 Certificates. They are also the author of The Unaccounted for Circles of Hell, SexyTime, which was a winner of the 2021 The Poetry Question Chapbook Contest, Dead Dog Poems which was the 2020 New Women's Voices Contest, and Gravity, which has been listed as One of the Best Breakup Books of All Time by Book Authority. Lynne presents regularly with state branches of NASW and NAMI on topics related to poetry, mass casualty events, and service dogs.

Afternoon Plenary Presenters

Now What? Moving Forward with Momentum

- Oronde Cruger (he/him, Speak About It)
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Thank you for joining us!

Give us feedback here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2025CSEC>