



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

Backgrounder: Connecting to Protect Conference

Feb. 16 - 18

About Connecting to Protect, the conference organizers

Connecting to Protect is a world-first global initiative to tackle children and young people's online pornography access, focussing on mental health and safety consequences. In most countries throughout the world, children and young people currently have unrestricted access to online pornography. Research shows that this access has the potential to contribute to developmental and social vulnerabilities. The mental health and safety implications on children and young people accessing online pornography are multi-dimensional. As a result, we are creating an opportunity for representatives of many sectors to dialogue and create a coordinated global response. Implementing primary, secondary and targeted public health prevention and education measures is imperative to avoid a worsening of the situation.

Canada a global leader in online pornography

Many Canadians are likely not aware that Canada is the source of much of the world's internet pornography. Mind Geek is the corporate hub that produces a large network of interconnected websites that generates an estimated \$460 billion (USD) annually. Connecting to Protects points out that these sites often monetize exploitive content (including children, youth and victims of rape). In addition, the sites' algorithms are finely tuned to provide viewers with more – and often more extreme – versions of the porn they're interested in. As Monsma-Selby adds, "It's an algorithm that is created to fuel addiction."

The rest of the world is noticing. An article by leading *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof ("[The Children of Pornhub](#)") called out the Canadian government while outlining the impact pornography has had on victims whose images were uploaded without their consent and spread across the global network of internet-porn.

More information on the conference

Stronger Together – protecting children from online pornography by inviting a public health response is an initiative to address this issue globally. The *Stronger Together Summit* facilitates expert-led educational and collaborative sessions on strategic responses to protect children and young people from online pornography. Hosted by Connecting to Protect, the summit focuses on:

- Current Research, neuroscience, psychology, child protection, and sociology
- Legislation and policy

- Technology and age verification
- Education & awareness strategies across all sectors
- Therapeutic protocols and strategies
- Lobbying or other campaign successes
- Child exploitation prevention & intervention (related to porn harms)

As part of participating in this world-first initiative, organizers request that summit delegates read and agree to the [memorandum of understanding](#). Where possible, they also invite attendees to contribute by providing an overview of their [country's current approaches to addressing this issue](#).

About Dr. Jocelyn Monsma-Selby, PhD

Dr. Monsma Selby is a mental health professional and sex therapist based in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work alumna (BSW '81, MSW '90) took a leadership role in the global fight against online porn after seeing, first-hand, the often tragic, fall-out in her practice.

The February virtual summit is the culmination of her ongoing efforts to raise awareness and push for a public health response to this issue. In spring 2020, she testified before the Canadian Senate in support of Bill-S-203, "An Act to restrict young persons' online access to sexually explicit material." She says because of unfettered access to sites like Pornhub, which is the fifth most visited site in the world, alarming numbers of children are being exposed to graphic sexual content.