



Widening the Circle

Volume 11

Issue 3

Spring 2010

IN THIS ISSUE

NAMHR ANNUAL CONFERENCE	1
2009-2010 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT PROFILE.....	2
DEVELOPING MY FIRST COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH PROJECT.....	3
SCHOLARSHIP/FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS 2010-2011 ..	4
SUMMER STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM	4
MENTAL HEALTH DATABASE UPDATE	4

**Save the date: August 16-20
NAMHR Summer School
Montreal, QC**

About NAMHR

The Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research (NAMHR) is a collaboration between academic and community-based researchers, mental health providers, and Aboriginal organizations. NAMHR aims to build research capacity to address the mental health needs of Aboriginal people in Canada. NAMHR was established in 2001 with funding from the Institute for Aboriginal Peoples' Health (IAPH) of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

NAMHR Annual Conference – VANCOUVER, JUNE 22-23, 2010

This year, NAMHR is holding its Annual Conference – *Aboriginal Peoples' Ways of Knowing & Wellbeing: Implications for Mental Health Research, Training, Practice and Policy* – at UBC Campus on June 22 and 23, 2010. We have the pleasure of being hosted at Sty-Wet-Tan, UBC First Nations House of Learning. Our thanks to Dr. Michael Chandler for taking the initiative to move the conference out of our home turf in Montreal. It has proven to be an excellent opportunity to showcase some of the West Coast's premier researchers in issues of Aboriginal mental health. West Coast highlights include Evan Adams, E. Richard Atleo,



Sty-Wet-Tan,
UBC First Nations House of Learning

Margo Greenwood, Bill Mussell and Vicki Smye.

Aboriginal mental health is by nature a very broad area of research. The themes this year include Historical Trauma, Truth & Reconciliation; Innovative Research Methods & Guidelines; Worldview & Wellbeing; Identity, Culture & Institutions; Cultural Safety & Competence in Training, Practice & Policy. Presenters represent experts from academia, communities, and agencies. It looks to be a very full and exciting agenda.

In addition, we will be presenting the Dr. Joseph Couture Award for the best academic paper in a clinical training program. Congratulations to Marc Zahradnik for his paper Resilience moderates the relationship between exposure to violence and posttraumatic reexperiencing in Mi'kmaq youth. Poster presentations will also be made.

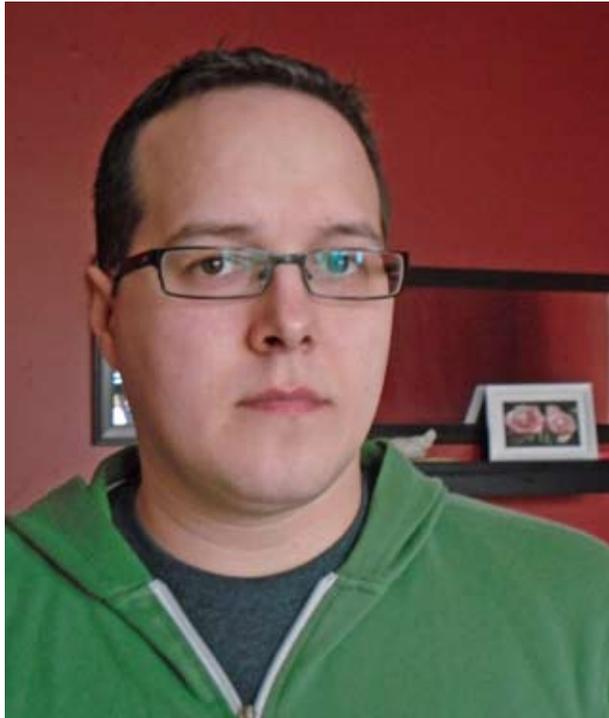
Please visit the NAMHR website (www.namhr.ca) for more information on the conference.

2009-2010 Scholarship Recipient Profile

– CHRISTOPHER MUSHQUASH

Christopher Mushquash is Ojibway, and a member of Pays Plat First Nation. He was born in Sioux Lookout, a rural community in Northwestern Ontario. His identity is strongly rooted in Aboriginal culture and experiences living in a rural community. Chris is a candidate in clinical psychology at Dalhousie University under the supervision of Drs. Sherry Stewart and Patrick McGrath, and with mentorship from Dr. Nancy Comeau.

Chris' dissertation consists of three studies and a methodology paper. Study one (Mushquash, Comeau, Stewart, & McGrath, 2008) examined Cooper's (1994) model of motives for drinking and showed that unlike non-Aboriginal adolescents, the predicted motives model structure was not supported. Study two (Mushquash, Comeau, & Stewart, 2007) was a pilot intervention study that occurred in partnership with three Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia. Compared to students who did not participate in the interventions, intervention participants drank less frequently, engaged in fewer binge-drinking episodes, had lower levels of



Christopher Mushquash

alcohol-related problems, were more likely to abstain from alcohol use, and reduced their marijuana use at four-month follow-up. Study three collected intervention

screening data in order to test personality and motives models that are predicted to exist; this manuscript is currently being prepared. The methodology paper (Mushquash, Comeau, McLeod, & Stewart, in press) describes a 4-stage process toward the development of culturally-relevant alcohol interventions for Aboriginal youth.

Chris has been fortunate to engage in meaningful research with excellent collaboration and mentorship from a variety of Aboriginal community members and researchers. This work has been recognized through a CIHR-IAPH Scientific Director's Award of Excellence in 2007, and the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research Joseph Couture Award in 2008. It has been through respectful, multi-disciplinary, and multi-sector collaboration that this work has been successful. His graduate education has been funded by the IAPH-ACADRE program beginning at its inception, and has continued to be funded through the transition to IAPH-NEAHR. The National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research has funded Chris' graduate studies for the past two years.



Developing my First Community Engaged Research Project

— STRYKER CALVEZ

Recently, I have achieved a great deal of success in establishing my first community-based research project with a local Aboriginal community. Throughout the process of learning about and engaging the community, I have had to balance the needs of my University with those of the community. In conjunction with my research about community related issues, I needed to learn how to engage and empower a community. From the moment I declared my intention to conduct this specific project I found myself struggling to negotiate the procedural expectations set by academic institutions with the community-centred procedures that I needed to establish with this community.



Stryker Calvez

On one side, the academic institutional needs required a research proposal with timelines, theoretical explanations of the phenomenon of interest and an expected course of action before I started the research. This approach to research is objectively distant and impersonal, which is a dominant Western approach to knowledge. On the other side, the development of an objectively distant and impersonal research proposal prior to gaining community involvement had the potential to invalidate the trust of community members, which I would need if I were to be allowed to undertake the research project. I had to be willing to find or create knowledge that was

not necessarily going to conform to Western values, for not being open to alternatives to the traditional academic process could be perceived as cultural insensitivity. I had to determine how to meet the needs of both of these key stakeholders.

The lesson that I want to relate to you is my realization that, for me, community-based research means being flexible with my own research goals and priorities. If I want to get involved with a community, it must be on their terms. I have to consider alternatives that may be more complicated for me, while making it more practical for the community. The majority of my university training has emphasized different ways of exercising control over variables, participants, data properties, etc. Community

engagement is a style of research that lessens researcher control in favour of community control. As a graduate researcher with relatively little experience in research, let alone community-based research, working with less control has been a new challenge. In this fashion I turned to the OCAP principles (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) as recommended by Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans and CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal People. These principles helped to guide me in the development of a research proposal that has ultimately been endorsed by the community

To meet the principles of OCAP, I proposed a multi-stage participatory action research project that would allow

community stakeholders to affect change at multiple points in the research. Rather than outlining a complete and complex course of action, each stage of data collection was designed as a single project with its own ethics application. In this manner, the community would maintain control of the research project, the development of community knowledge and the surveying of the community. In addition, a steering-advisory committee was struck with volunteer community members and key stakeholders from the community and the university. The committee's main responsibility is to ensure that the project stays community-centred by reviewing the research process and providing cultural sensitivity recommendations for the research and the interpretation of the data. All materials, data and reports, are provided to the committee to be forwarded to the community.

For the community members, control and ownership of the research was established by acknowledging that the interview data, digital files and transcripts are always the property of each participant. Providing ongoing access to the data is important in establishing ownership of the data because, in my opinion, without access and control, ownership is a token gesture. This last provision will provide additional steps to the research process and further complicate the research project – a small inconvenience given the value of the trust and engagement proffered by the community.

To-date, I owe a great deal of my success to a number of people who have invested their time and energy in this research project. I have received general acknowledgement that the research project will be beneficial to the community, even without significant results. I take this to mean that I have managed to contribute to a form of research that supports Aboriginal concerns without imposing a Western agenda. For this I can take no credit as I have a wonderful community of members to draw upon, thank you!

Scholarship/Fellowship Recipients 2010-2011

The main goal of the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research is to train researchers to conduct mental health research relevant to the needs and priorities of Aboriginal populations and communities. To that end, we award one-year scholarships to graduate students at the Master's and PhD level, in a variety of disciplines, at universities across Canada. This year we were able to offer scholarships to 4 Master's students, and 8 PhD students. We also offer post-doctoral fellowships, and this year have offered awards to two exceptional candidates. Congratulations everyone.

MASTER'S AWARD (\$18,000)

- Jessie King, *First Nation Studies*, University of Northern British Columbia
- Briana Melia, *Community Health and Epidemiology*, University of Saskatchewan
- Billie Joe Rogers, *Psychology*, Simon Fraser University
- Tania Smethurst, *Psychology*, University of Victoria

DOCTORAL AWARD (\$21,000)

- James Allen, *Psychology*, University of Victoria
- Jody Burnett, *Educational Psychology*, University of Regina
- Stryker Calvez, *Psychology*, University of Guelph
- Elizabeth Fast, *SocialWork*, McGill University
- Janice Victor, *Psychology*, University of Saskatchewan
- Mireille De La Sablonniere-Griffin, *SocialWork*, McGill University
- Thea Luig, *Anthropology*, University of Alberta
- Graham Trull, *Adult Clinical Psychology*, University of Windsor

POST-DOCTORAL AWARD (\$42,000)

- Krista Maxwell, *Social Science and Health*, University of Toronto
- Sarah Fraser, *Psychology*, McGill University

Summer Student Internship Program

The Summer Internship Program is a 10-week paid internship under the supervision of members of NAMHR. Interns work with their mentors on various aspects of the research process to develop research capacity and to introduce developing researchers into the area of Aboriginal mental health research. This summer, 7 internships were awarded across the country.

- Talia Bronstein, supervisor Dr. Ronald Niezen
- Martina Matthewson, supervisor Dr. Colleen Anne Dell
- Sarah Nelson, supervisors Dr. James Waldram/Dr. Josée Lavoie
- Michelle Olding, supervisor Dr. Naomi Adelson
- Christine Smillie-Adjarkwa, supervisor Dr. Naomi Adelson
- Cynthia Stirbys, supervisor Dr. Laurence Kirmayer
- Stanley Yellow Horn, supervisor Dr. Jacob Burack

Mental Health Database Update

Our Mental Health Programs for Aboriginal Peoples in Canada database has recently been updated. This is a searchable tool available online at www.namhr.ca. It includes existing mental health promotion, prevention and intervention programs and models for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is designed to be easily used by anyone interested in knowing what is available in Canada, by region, theme, population demographic, or keyword. Contact Colette Isaac if you are interested in more information, or would like to suggest changes or updates to the content.

Mailing List

The NAMHR mailing list is for researchers, health professionals, and others interested in Aboriginal mental health and is a useful place to post announcements, post questions or locate resource people.

To subscribe to the NAMHR listserv, send a registration email directly to the listserv program at listserv@lists.mcgill.ca. In the email the subject is to be left blank, and the body of the email should contain the following one line:

SUBNAMHRfirstname lastname (replace the first name and lastname with your first and last names).

Everyone is welcome to subscribe to the listserv.

Production

Katya Petrov, BSc, BFA, Dip Ed is the NAMHR Communications Coordinator.

Widening the Circle is published by the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research Culture & Mental Health Unit
Institute of Community & Family Psychiatry
4333 Côte Ste Catherine Rd
Montreal, Quebec H3T 1E4
E-mail: colette.isaac@mail.mcgill.ca
To download previous issues of *Widening the Circle* visit www.namhr.ca/newsletters

Comments, Suggestions, Submissions

If you wish to submit an article or have information about projects, organizations, announcements or upcoming events, that you would like published in *Widening the Circle*, please contact colette.isaac@mail.mcgill.ca. Articles should be 300-350 words and contain contact information for the said project or organization.