WIDENING THE CIRCLE

Newsletter of the Aboriginal Mental Health Research Team &
The National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research

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The Importance of Being Honest Gail Guthrie Valaskakis and the Work of Home, Culture and the Chippewa

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In one of her scholarly essays Gail Guthrie Valaskakis described, in a very straightforward way, something that must have been very painful and difficult. This difficult thing was leaving home and the silence that gripped her grandmother's throat when she left. Gail Guthrie Valaskakis left her Wisconsin reservation for University and in doing so, she silenced the woman into a profound worry, one that took the form of grief. "Will she come back? Will she get hurt? Will she forget us?" One can only imagine the pain of these questions as they settled into her grandmother's throat and steadied her tongue so that she could not, or would not speak.

The significance of this silence is readable through Guthrie Valaskakis' scholarly body of work. In her work Guthrie Valaskakis is *not* silent on the difficult questions of Aboriginal rights, representation and identity. Hers are the most honest, reflexive and theoretically engaged essays that may be found in the rare intersection between Native American Studies and Cultural studies. Her essays travel through disciplinary worlds, blending autobiography, Chippewa ethnology and contemporary Native American Art criticism with exegetical readings of Hall, Derrida and Foucault. Where there is *still* an easy recourse to essentialisms by contemporary scholars in Native American Studies, where there is *still* dominance over Native American ethnography and culture by the paradigms of salvage and science, Guthrie

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Valaskakis has taken on, in refreshing honesty and theoretical rigor, the very conditions that beget those recourses to utter simplicity and dominance. There is nothing simple about her work, and for this we should be grateful, as there is very little that is simple in colonialism, the exigencies of settler society or contemporary Indian life.

When we "read" her administrative activities in the seventies and eighties alongside of her scholarly work we see that "home" is a place that she not only carried with her to different spaces, it is a place that she made for others. Whether these spaces be the first *Native Friendship Centre of Montreal* (1973), the first Indian College in Canada (*Manitou College* 1975) or institutions that she either created, worked with and worked upon, such as the *Concordia Council of First Nations Education* (now *The Centre for Native Education*), *Waseskun House*, *The Aboriginal Healing Foundation*, the life work of Gail Guthrie Valaskakis has been about making a space and a place for Indian social reproduction, intellectual production, community construction and maintenance; her work has largely been about making a "home" for people that really needed one and for not being silent on matters that really matter in the everyday lives and politics of Indian people.

On March 10th, 2002, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis was awarded an Aboriginal Achievement Award for her distinguished work in Communication Studies. This award was in recognition of her contribution to the study of communication technology and practice in the Canadian and the Indigenous North. Guthrie Valaskakis is also currently involved in the newly created Aboriginal Scholars Program and is a co-director of the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research. As both her scholarly and administrative activities can attest, she has spent her life returning to her home and remaking that home in her work and her practice. She has done this for many, many others: for her students, her colleagues, her family, her friends, for the strangers that benefited from her efforts. In her tenure as a graduate student at McGill University, as a founding member of *Manitou College* and the *Native Friendship Centre of Montreal*, as a Board member in every urban Native organization in the city of Montreal, as a grade school teacher in Kahnawake, as a Professor of Communication Studies, as the Dean of Arts of Sciences (*Concordia University*) and now as Director of Research (*Aboriginal Healing Foundation*). Gail Guthrie Valaskakis left home and in doing so, gripped her grandmother's tongue and throat into silence. She has, through her life's work, maintained her commitment to her home, to her Grandmother, and in doing so, has loosened all of our tongues so that we too may speak on matters that really matter to us.

For more information on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, please call (613) 237-4441 or toll free at (888) 725-8886 or visit their website at www.ahf.ca. For information on the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research please consult www.mcgill.ca/psychiatry/namh

Upcoming issues of **Widening the Circle** will feature profiles and discussions of the work of those people and organizations involved with both the Aboriginal Mental Health Research Team and the newly created National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research.

The Summer 2002 issue of **Widening the Circle** will feature a summary of the Advanced Summer Institute that took place from June 3rd to June 5th at the Institute for Community and Family Psychiatry, Jewish General Hospital, Montreal.

Dr. Ann C. Macaulay and Tracee K. Diabo at the Institute of Community& Family Psychiatry

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES TO COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH: THE KAHNAWAKE SCHOOLS DIABETES PREVENTION PROJECTS

On Friday, February 8th, Tracee Diabo and Dr. Ann Macaulay, research coordinator and scientific director respectively, of the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP), held a joint presentation at the Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry. Their talk, entitled "The Challenges and Successes to Community Based Research: The Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project", traced the historiography of KSDPP, and in the process discussed the historical prevalence of type 2 diabetes in Kahnawake.

Diabetes and in particular type-2 diabetes, is a disease that directly affects hundreds of Kahnawakero:non (people of Kahnawake); indirectly the disease undoubtedly affects the entire community. As we learned from Diabo and Macaulay, an estimated 12% of the community's population between 45-64 years old has been diagnosed with type-2 diabetes. In some Aboriginal communities, diabetes affects 50% of 50 year olds. The prevalence of diabetes in Aboriginal communities in Canada is estimated to be 3-5 times higher than the general population, numbers that are startling when considering that diabetes in Aboriginal communities was rare prior to the 1940s.

KSDPP is reflective and informed by elements of traditional Iroquois philosophy such as living in balance, the rights and responsibilities of *onkwehonwe*, and decision making within the context of the Seventh Generation. Established in 1994, KSDPP is a participatory research project with three equal partners: community researchers, academic researchers and community members as represented by the Community Advisory Board (CAB). The Community Advisory Board meets monthly to oversee the project, give feedback and ensure that the needs and desires of the community are being addressed. The relationship between the community and academic researchers participating in the project are based on mutual respect. Research results do not leave the community until they have been presented and approved by the community advisory board.

Research results are disseminated throughout the community through such vehicles as the local newspaper, the Eastern Door – whose readership also includes members of other Indigenous communities, community meetings, as well as the local radio station. The strong and effective dissemination of research results was/is highlighted as one of the reasons for project success. Other reasons for success included access to varied sources of funding, integrated intervention and evaluation, as well as the development of the KSDPP Code of Research Ethics.

While KSDPP is a highly successful and well-regarded project, there are several challenges that were discussed by Diabo, such as the sometime negative perception of "research" in the community, issues of ownership over research results, existing limited capacities and knowledge management. Despite these challenges, *Kahnawakero:non* in partnership with KSDPP, seem to have fully embraced the mandate to "take responsibility to heal ourselves".

For more information about the KSDPP please call (450) 635-4374

Aboriginal Health Research in Canada The Time is Now

Dr. Jeff Reading Visits McGill

Mary Ellen Macdonald

Doctoral candidate, McGill University &
Montreal Children's Hospital

Dr. Jeff Reading, the Scientific Director of the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health (IAPH) spoke at McGill University on April 15, 2002. The IAPH is one of the thirteen virtual Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Dr. Reading is Mohawk from Southern Ontario.

This presentation, part of a tour of Canadian universities, was on the "Opportunities in Aboriginal Health Research." Attended by approximately 35 people – students, professors, researchers and community members – this talk inspired conversation and debate, taking the open forum that proceeded the presentation over the allotted time.

Dr. Reading is focused on getting the message out that there is no longer a dearth in funding for health research in Canada. In order to ensure that a sizable portion of this available money goes to the Aboriginal sector, Dr. Reading argued that capacity for research has to be increased in Aboriginal communities. Topics addressed in this session included how to build this capacity, especially when Canadian universities have a poor track record of recruiting and supporting Aboriginal students. A call came from more than one audience member for McGill to be more proactive in its recruiting of Aboriginal students into both research and clinical disciplines.

Another key topic of the forum was the need for research *on* research ethics given the complicated relationships between many Aboriginal communities and academic researchers and institutions. As well, the audience inquired about strategies for regional networking to increase the potential for successful research applications from the CIHR, as well as ways to link international Indigenous networks across national borders in order to expand the potential for both local and global research.

For more information see: www.cihr.ca
or
www.cihr.ca/institutes/iaph/iaph_e.shtml

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Second Annual National Gathering of Graduate Students

Kahá:wi Jacobs

Doctoral candidate, McGill University

On March 28, 2002 the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health held the second annual National Gathering of Graduate Students. This one-day conference brought together graduate students from across Canada who are studying Indigenous peoples' health. The aim of the gathering was to open dialogue between Aboriginal researchers and IAPH Advisory Board members, discussing ways to improve university-based health research.

Over fifty individuals attended and discussed the following topics: 1) Funding initiatives and the new Institutes; 2) Training needs (mentorship, graduate studies issues, research interests, coursework, methodologies, comprehensive exams, proposal writing, publishing; 3) Linkages-Dissemination, Networks, Collaborative Research; and 4) Health careers. Several points were made in the discussions including: the need for increased input of Aboriginal graduate students in the direction of health research; the importance of exploring both risk and protective factors; and the need to devise a national health surveillance system for Aboriginal peoples to provide vital statistics.

Dr. Jeff Reading, Director of the Institute for Aboriginal Peoples' Health also presented information on the IAPH's strategic plan. He covered ACADRE centres, RFAs, ethics, and international collaborations. His was a very positive outlook of the future of health research among First Nations peoples in Canada.

The gathering also included two speaker presentations. Vera Caine, an MN student at the University of Alberta gave a presentation entitled *Shifting relationships: Aboriginal women's narratives of living with HIV*. As well, Tanya Verrall, a Ph.D. student from McGill University presented research findings in a presentation entitled *The development of community-based nutrition activities to improve iron intake in infants from Chisasibi, Quebec*.

Aboriginal graduate students interested in having their names added to the IAPH's Graduate distribution list should contact Trudy Jacobs, Administrative Assistant, CIHR - Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health at tb.jacobs@utoronto.ca. For general information on the Institute for Aboriginal Peoples' Health please consult www.cihr.ca/institutes/iaph/iaph_e.shtml

Contributors to this Issue

Kahá:wi Jacobs is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University. She is currently the Warren Fellow at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada.

Mary Ellen Macdonald is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at McGill University. She is currently working as a researcher in palliative care at the Montreal Children's Hospital.

Audra Simpson is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at McGill University. She is a Fulbright Fellow and was recently awarded the Charles Eastman Fellowship at Dartmouth College.

Recent Publications

by Members of the Aboriginal Mental Health Research Team and the National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research

Adelson, Naomi (2001). "Re-imagining Aboriginality: An Indigenous People's Response to Social Suffering and Recovery", in Das, Veena and Kleinman, Arthur (et al.), *Remaking A World: Violence, Social Suffering and Recovery*, pp. 76-101.

Adelson, Naomi (2001). "Gathering Knowledge: Reflections on the Anthropology of Identity Aboriginality, and the Annual Gatherings in Whapmagoostui, Quebec", in Scott, Colin (ed.), *Aboriginal Autonomy and Development in Northern Quebec and Labrador*. Vancouver: UBC Press, pp. 283-303.

Chandler, Michael (2000). "Surviving time: The persistence of identity in this culture and that", *Culture & Psychology*, 6(2), pp. 209-231.

Browne, Annette and **Jo-Anne Fiske** (2001). "First Nations women's encounters with mainstream health care services". *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 23(2), 126-147.

Fiske, Jo-Anne (1999). "Ordered Lives And Disordered Souls Pathologizing Female Bodies of the Colonial Frontier", in Beaman, Lori (ed.), *New Perspectives on Social Deviance*.

Boothroyd, LJ, **Kirmayer LJ**, et al (2001). "Completed suicides among the Inuit of northern Quebec", *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 165(6), pp. 749-55.

Potvin, Louise, **Cargo**, **Margaret**, McComber, Alex C., Delormier, Treena and **Ann C. Macaulay** (in press). "Implementing Participatory Intervention and Research in Communities: Lessons from the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project", *Social Science and Medicine*

Horn, Ojistoh, Paradis, Gilles, Potvin, Louise, **Macaulay**, **Ann C**. and Serge Desrosiers (2001). "Correlates and predictors of adiposity among Mohawk children", *Preventative Medicine: an International Journal Devoted to Practice & Theory*, 33(4), pp. 274-281.

Macaulay, Ann C., Gibson, N., Freemon, WL, Commanda, LE., McCabe, ML, Robbins, CM and PL Twohig (2001). "The community's voice in research", *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 164(12), pp. 1661-3.

Macdonald, Mary Ellen (in press). "Writing at the Margins to Bring Suffering to the Center", *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 39(3).

McCormick, Rod (2000). "Aboriginal traditions in the treatment of substance abuse". *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 34(1), pp. 25-32.

Samson, Colin (1999). "The Disposesson of the Innu and the Colonial Magic of Canadian Liberalism", *Citizenship Studies*, 3(1), pp. 5-25.

Samson, **Colin**, Wilson, James and Johnathan Mazower (1999). *Canada's Tibet. The Killing of the Innu*. London: Survival International.

Waldram, James (2000). "The efficacy of traditional medicine: current theoretical and methodological issues", *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 14(4), pp. 603-25.

Wenzel, George ed. (2000). The social economy of sharing: resource allocation and modern hunter-gatherers. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.

*Bold type indicates the person is a member of the AMHRT or the NNAMHR.

Announcements

The Aboriginal Mental Health Research Team is pleased to announce the additions of Professor Jacob Burack from the School of Educational and Counselling Psychology, McGill University, Professor George Wenzel from the Department of Geography, McGill University and Dr. Ann C. Macaulay, Family Physician and Professor in the School of Social Studies and Medicine. Professor Burack's interests include emotional and developmental risk and resilience among First Nations youth. Professor Wenzel has conducted extensive research on Inuit ecology, land use and social organization; his current research focuses on the economics of modern Inuit hunting at Restoule Bay and Clyde River, Nunavut. Dr. Macaulay is the scientific coordinator of the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project, she has published extensively on community based participatory research, research ethics and diabetes prevention.

The AMHRT held it's annual Advisory Board meeting in the fall. The Advisory Board is composed of representatives from various Aboriginal community organizations. Currently represented on the AMHRT advisory board are: the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal, the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, Quebec Native Women Inc., the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project, the Cree School Board, Waseskun House and the First Peoples' House at McGill University.

The following students were selected to participate in the Aboriginal Summer Student Internship Program: Richard Bellefleur (Delaware), Randy Montour (Mohawk), and Seri Jacobs (Mohawk).

The National Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research is pleased to announce the addition of Professor Jo-anne Fiske, University of Northern British Columbia and Professor Colin Samson, Essex University, United Kingdom. Professor Fiske has worked extensively with First Nations Groups in British Columbia, she has published on the health care experiences of First Nations women, the impact of the Indian Act on Aboriginal women and she is currently working on a research project examining the history of residential schools in Canada. Colin Samson has worked for and with the Innu of Labrador and Davis Inlet, he is a co-author of *Canada's Tibet: The Killing of the Innu,* he has also published on the impact of Canadian Liberalism *on the Innu.*

The website for the NNAMHR was recently launched. The website contains valuable references, information on upcoming events and biographies about the people and organizations affiliated with the NNAMHR. The website was constructed and is maintained by Melissa Mair, a graduate student in psychology at McGill University and Sadeq Rahimi, who is a graduate student in transcultural psychiatry at McGill. The website address is:

http://www.mcgill.ca/psychiatry/namh

Caroline Tait, a Métis doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at McGill University and coordinator of the NNAMHR was recently awarded a post-doctoral fellowship from the Canadian Institute of Health Research.

Upcoming Events

Where are the Children? A Photographic History of Residential Schools across Canada. The exhibition is presented at the National Archives of Canada from June 18th, 2002-February 3rd, 2003.

For more information contact Angie Bruce at (613) 237-4441 or (888) 725-8886.

World's Indigenous People's Conference On Education. August 4th-10th, 2002. Calgary, Alberta – Stoney Nation Lands.

For more information contact (403) 258-1775 or wipce@fnahec.org

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Northern Traditions and Healing. Association Of American Indian Physicians 31st Annual Meeting and Conference. August 1st-6th, 2002, Anchorage Alaska. For more information contact the Association of American Indian Physicians 1225 Sovereign Row, Suite 103, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73108 (405) 946-7072 or by email at aaip@aaip.com.

Aboriginal Youth Inhalant and Drug Addiction Worskhop. Presented by the Nechi Institute in partnership with Youth Solvent Addiction Committee. This 5 day workshop from August 19th-23rd, is designed to meet the unique needs of those working with Aboriginal youth who are challenged with addictions. The registration deadline is July 31st, 2002.

For more information about the workshop please contact the Nechi Training Research & Health Promotions Institute at (800) 459-1884 and by fax at (780) 458-1883.

There's No Health Without Mental Health – 12th Annual The MHS Conference. August 20-22nd, 2002, Sydney Convention Centre, Sydney, NSW.

The MHS 2002 will focus on three broad themes for mental health services: the mental health of individuals, populations and organizations.

For further information please consult the following website:
http://www.themhs.org/conferences/main.htm

Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference: Celebrating Our Spiritual Strengths and Cultural Values. September 2-6, 2002 Albuquerque, New Mexico.

For more information please consult:
www.healingourspiritworldwide.com

Warriors of the Nations…Let the Healing Begin. Hosted by the Northwest Residential School Healing Society in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, is scheduled for September 29-October 2nd, 2002.

For more information please contact Tammy Donovan at (250) 638-0451, extension 36, toll free at (888) 310-3311, extension 36, or by email at tammy.donovan@telus.net

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Life Strategies: Challenges in Native Mental Health. Annual conference of the Native Mental Health Association of Canada. October 3rd-6th, 2002, London, Ontario.

For more information please contact the Native Mental Health Association of Canada at (604) 793-1983, or by fax at (604) 793-4557, or by email at nmha@telus.net.