

Indigenous Mentorship Network of Ontario

Year 3 Report

Summer 2019 - Spring 2020

Land Acknowledgment

IMN-Ontario is housed at Western University and our network extends across the Province and beyond. We acknowledge the many territories and diverse Indigenous communities of our mentors, trainees and network participants across Ontario and Turtle Island (North America).

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing urban Indigenous population.

IMN-Ontario values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) funds 8 regionally based Indigenous Mentorship Network Programs in Canada:



Indigenous Mentorship Network of Ontario – Ontario

Based at Western University

Indigenous Mentorship Network of the Pacific North-West – British Columbia and the Yukon

Based at the University of Victoria

Alberta Indigenous Mentorship in Health Innovation (AIM-HI) – Alberta

Based at the University of Calgary

Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentorship Network Program – Saskatchewan

Based at University of Saskatchewan

Prairie Indigenous Knowledge Exchange Network (PIKE-Net) Mentorship Program – Manitoba

Based at University of Manitoba

Quebec Indigenous Mentorship Network Program – Quebec

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network – Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick

Based at Dalhousie University and Memorial University

Ombaashi Network – National/international outreach and opportunities

Based at Thompson Rivers University

IMN-Ontario welcomes all current and potential students, community members, and organizations interested in Indigenous health research to participate in our Network!

Sign up to join our mailing list and follow us on social media:

Facebook: @OntarioIMN

Twitter: ImnOntario

Instagram: IMN_Ontario

www.imnp.uwo.ca

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Message from Dr. Chantelle Richmond, Nominated Principal Investigator

Another year has quickly passed – a year filled with excitement and planning in anticipation of the 2020 National Gathering of Graduate Students (NGGS) that did not come to be, a year that delivered us a global pandemic, and a year that we found innovative ways to stay connected as a network to continue providing unique mentorship and scholarship opportunities for Indigenous Health researchers.

In 2019, our Network was honoured to become the host of the NGGS and while we had planned to invite 70+ participants to London in May, we had to make the difficult decision to cancel our event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After months of planning a Gathering that would bring together a constellation of some truly beautiful hearts and minds, we were heartbroken to make this decision. I want to say *miigwetch* to all who poured their time, efforts and love into conceptualizing NGGS 2020, especially our local Host Committee– Katie Big-Canoe, Vanessa Ambtman Smith, Veronica Reitmeier, Emily Beacock, and Amanda Myers.

The Mentorship Networks were conceived greater than two decades ago. In the time since, we have witnessed a transformation in the way Indigenous health research is done in Canada. We have come to be known as leaders in this work. NGGS 2020 was meant to be a place to celebrate the progress we have made, and to share the relational ethics and best practices that underlie this work. Please trust that we will find a new space and time to come together to share and expand upon these ideas.

Despite the disappointing end to our planned gathering, this report shares many exciting events that have transpired this year, including the announcement of awardees for our third round of scholarship and seed grants, and ways in which our Network has shifted its activities in response to the pandemic. We are proud of the community we have started to build and are hopeful that we will be able to gather next year. On behalf of the Network, know that you and your families are in our hearts and minds. We wish you all continued good health.

Read about IMN-Ontario's backstory in Dr. Richmond's 2018 article, [Try Bravery for a Change: Supporting Indigenous Health Training and Development in Canadian Universities](#)

IMN-Ontario Staff and Mentors

Our small team housed at Western includes two other staff. Veronica Reitmeier is an undergraduate student who works part-time as the Network's Research Assistant and manages our social media, and Katie Big-Canoe is our full-time Program Coordinator who oversees all Network activities. This year, PhD student, Vanessa Ambtman-Smith joined our team, who worked as Research Assistant for the National Gathering of Graduate Students.

We have also assembled a large group of dedicated Mentors from diverse areas of expertise, all of whom are passionate about Indigenous health research and training the next generation of Indigenous scholars. Spread across the province, they support our network in different ways, sometimes working directly with students, or supporting network activities by offering webinars, hosting events, or reviewing applications.



About IMN-Ontario

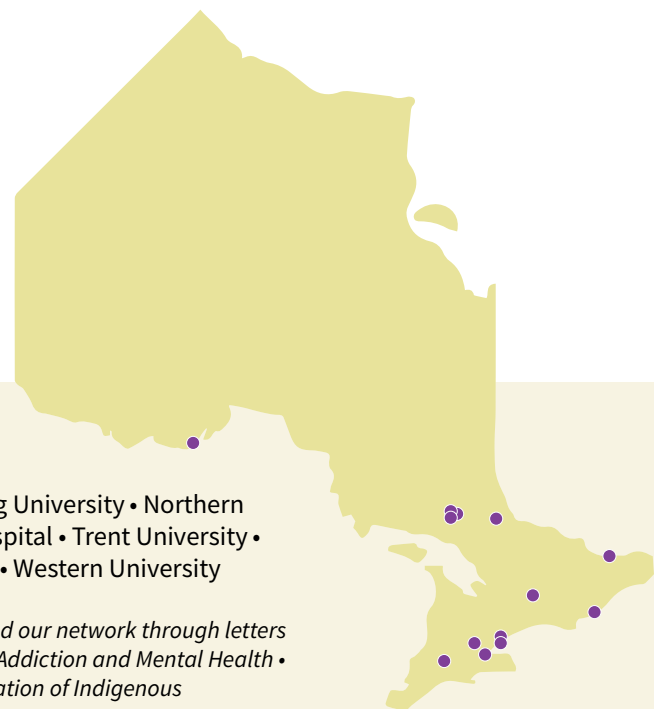
The Indigenous Mentorship Network of Ontario (IMN-Ontario) provides First Nations, Inuit and Métis scholars and trainees with high quality mentorship, training, and opportunities to engage in Indigenous health and well-being research. We are funded as part of a five-year, Canada-wide Indigenous Mentorship Network Program through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)'s Institute of Indigenous Health Research.

IMN-Ontario is fundamentally rooted in the philosophy of 'community first', bringing together 100+ scholars, trainees and community partners of diverse skills, experiences and methodologies in Indigenous health research. We are an interdisciplinary collaboration supported by 13 partnering research institutions, including the leading Indigenous health scholars and research centres in Ontario. Our partnering institutions support the Network in different ways, including hosting scholarships at their universities, facilitating or hosting mentorship or learning opportunities, and helping to fund IMN-Ontario activities.

IMN-Ontario Partner Institutions

Health Sciences North Research Institute (Sudbury) • Lakehead University • Laurentian University • McMaster University • Nipissing University • Northern Ontario School of Medicine • Queen's University • St. Michael's Hospital • Trent University • University of Guelph • University of Ottawa • University of Toronto • Western University

Chi-miigwetch to our community & academic partners, who have supported our network through letters of support and/or celebrated our launch: Cancer Care Ontario • Centre for Addiction and Mental Health • Chiefs of Ontario • Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences • Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres • Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre



Mno Nimkodadding Geegi: Supporting and growing the next generation of Indigenous health scholars

IMN-Ontario's driving force is inspired by the Anishinaabe concept, Mno Nimkodadding Geegi ('we are all connected'), encompassing the inter-relationships among youth and elders, health and environment, cultural practices, institutional policies, and many more. We seek to create and sustain the very best training environments and mentorship opportunities for current and up and coming Indigenous scholars at the undergraduate, Master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels, with particular emphasis on community-based research.

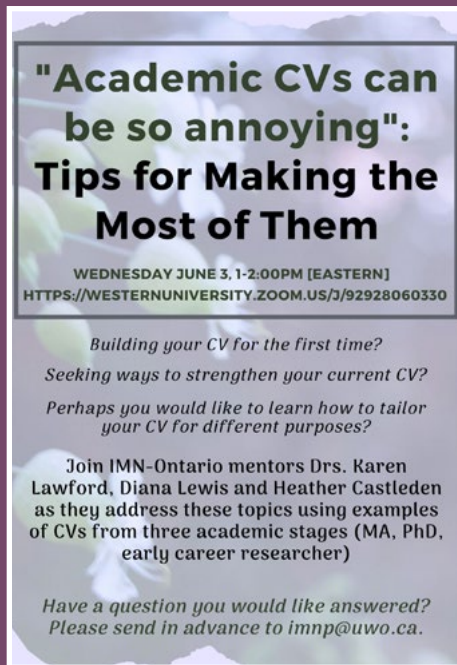
We focus on four primary activity areas, holding Mno Nimkodadding Geegi and our community of students, scholars, and partners held at the centre of our work. Within these four areas, some of our offerings include:

- Quarterly webinars to share knowledge, advice, and best practices
- Annual scholarships and seed grants for Indigenous trainees
- Annual community-based summer institute
- Engagement in local, national and international networks
- Research innovation and publishing opportunities
- Cultural, social and academic tools and resources



2019-2020 Webinar Highlights

Webinars provide opportunities for students and community members to learn more about IMN-Ontario and how to participate in our Network, as well as supports and information related to academic and professional development. It was also particularly important this year to provide a virtual space to gather and connect with cultural supports and teachings.



**"Academic CVs can be so annoying":
Tips for Making the Most of Them**

WEDNESDAY JUNE 3, 1-2:00PM [EASTERN]
[HTTPS://WESTERNUNIVERSITY.ZOOM.US/J/92928060330](https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/92928060330)

Building your CV for the first time?
Seeking ways to strengthen your current CV?
Perhaps you would like to learn how to tailor your CV for different purposes?

Join IMN-Ontario mentors Drs. Karen Lawford, Diana Lewis and Heather Castleden as they address these topics using examples of CVs from three academic stages (MA, PhD, early career researcher)

Have a question you would like answered?
Please send in advance to imnp@uwo.ca.



Are you a graduate student interested in Indigenous epidemiology and wondering what opportunities are available for Indigenous students?

IMN-ONTARIO WEBINAR

Join Dr. Jennifer Walker as she hosts a webinar on Friday February 7th 10:00-11:00am [Eastern]

There will be opportunity to ask questions or you are welcome to send questions in advance to imnp@uwo.ca.

Webinar Link: <https://zoom.us/j/7407295673>



IMN-Ontario Webinars

Bi-weekly (Tuesdays)
May 12, 26,
June 9, 23,
10-11am

Take a school/work break and
join Liz Akiwenzie
as she shares teachings

<https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/9604054044>

Do you have any questions about teachings for Liz?
Comment below, or email imnp@uwo.ca



IMN Scholarship and NGGS Application Support

In January, Katie delivered two webinars, the first offering information and support related to IMN-Ontario scholarship and seed grant opportunities, and the second about applying for the National Gathering of Graduate Students (NGGS).

Indigenous Epidemiology

In February, Dr. Jennifer Walker (Laurentian University) discussed Indigenous epidemiology and the various graduate school opportunities available for Indigenous students.

Indigenous Teachings with Liz Akiwenzie

During the pandemic lock downs between April and the end of June, Traditional Knowledge Keeper Liz Akiwenzie provided a virtual space to gather, learn and connect, delivering 5 bi-weekly webinars.

Academic CVs Webinar

In June, Dr. Karen Lawford, Dr. Diana Lewis, and Dr. Heather Castleden provided tips and guidance to help Indigenous health scholars build the curriculum vitae (CV) that makes them stand out above the rest! Participants were taught how to highlight their educational background, experience and key academic achievements, and how to tailor their CV for different purposes -- from applying for MA programs, to PhDs, and early career research opportunities.

2020 Scholarships and Seed Grants

Total funds awarded Year 3: \$97,500

In our third year, IMN-Ontario awarded 9 scholarships and one seed grant.

Scholarship Awardees

In 2020, we awarded five graduate and health professional scholarships to Indigenous students pursuing research in applied community-based Indigenous health and well-being.

We awarded four undergraduate scholarships to Indigenous students enrolled in an undergraduate program. These awards are intended to support Indigenous students who are pursuing academic studies with the future goal of utilizing their degree within an applied Indigenous health community context.

[Read more about each of our 2020 Awardees on our website.](#)



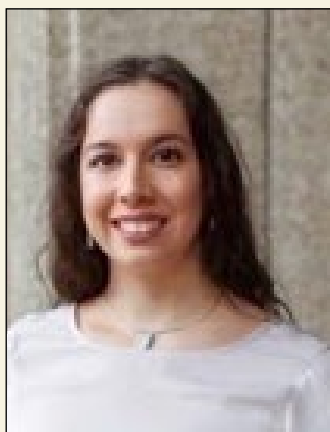
Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing
PhD student, Social Justice
Education and Indigenous Health,
University of Toronto



Olivia Franks
Masters student,
Health Promotion
Queen's University



Andrea Martel
PhD student,
Dalla Lana School of Public
Health, University of Toronto



Shanna Peltier
Masters student, School and
Clinical Child Psychology,
University of Toronto



Jacqui Powless
Masters student, Health
Research Methodology,
McMaster University



Alia Big George
Undergraduate student,
Faculty of Health Science,
Western University



Félix Larocque
Undergraduate student,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Ottawa



Kia Peters
Undergraduate student,
Food and Nutritional
Sciences, Western University



Tehya Quachegan
Undergraduate student,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Western University

Seed Grant Awardees

Indigenous post-doctoral fellows and new investigators undertaking applied community-based health research can apply for IMN-Ontario Seed Grants up to \$5,000 per year. In 2020, we awarded one Seed Grant:



Dr. Lorrilee McGregor, Northern Ontario School of Medicine

Dr. Lorrilee McGregor is an Anishinaabe from Whitefish River First Nation on Manitoulin Island. She is an Assistant Professor at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine at Laurentian University in Sudbury where she teaches about Indigenous peoples' health. Dr. McGregor has focused her research on First Nation community health issues such as mental health and addictions, diabetes, physical activity, and nutrition. She has also worked with First Nation communities and organizations on program evaluation and strategic planning. For the past 18 years, Dr. McGregor has been an active member of the Manitoulin Anishinaabek Research Review Committee, a community research ethics committee, and has served as the Chair for most of that time.

Chi-Miigwetch to our Year 3 Award Adjudicators

- Dr. Anita Benoit, *University of Toronto*
- Dr. Michael Robidoux, *University of Ottawa*
- Dr. Amanda Sheppard, *Cancer Care Ontario*
- Dr. Lloy Wylie, *Western University*
- Dr. Chantelle Richmond, *Western University*

Networking Beyond Ontario

Building national and international connections

2019 World Indigenous Cancer Conference, Calgary

In September 2019, McMaster University undergraduate student Josha Rafael was invited to represent our network in Calgary, AB, as a volunteer for the World Indigenous Cancer Conference. Volunteers were responsible for moderating breakout sessions and organizing registration and roundtable sessions, but also had the opportunity to liaise with Indigenous scholars, physicians, and Elders.

"I just wanted to thank you for facilitating the opportunity for me to attend WICC in Calgary. I was able to meet my Indigenous physician idol, Dr. Nadine Caron, and also Dr. Evan Adams, singer Susan Aglukark, and many wonderful elders and scholars from around the world. Overall, I had an amazing experience as a volunteer and attendee! Hiy hiy." -Josha, IMN-Ontario Student Representative



2019 International Indigenous Mentorship Workshop, New Zealand

In December, IMN-Ontario Mentor Dr. Jennifer Walker traveled to New Zealand where she represented our Network at the International Indigenous Mentorship Workshop. This workshop was co-hosted by the CIHR Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (IIPH), the Health Research Council (HRC) of New Zealand and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of Australia.

CIHR also invited students from across Canada to apply for travel awards. Two of the three student recipients were IMN-Ontario students. Congratulations, Olivia Franks and Brittany McBeath!



COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Student Care Packages

We wanted to let our students know we were thinking of them and that we were still here to support them throughout the pandemic. In April, we mailed and hand delivered 45 care packages to our students, and received a lot of positive feedback!

"Thank you so much for the care package! I received it in the mail the other day and it brought me so much joy! I am particularly excited about the Embers copy. What a beautiful way to remind us to take care of our spiritual health during these unusual times. Thank you!" - IMN-Ontario Student

Emergency Financial Support

In addition to the care packages, we were able to offer financial support to **34** of our students through our \$20,000 emergency COVID-19 Indigenous Student Support Fund. In less than one week, we received almost 200 applications which made choosing recipients was very difficult. We are very thankful to our Western finance team for helping us to process all of the payments.

"I am so grateful for the support (as always) from IMN, thank you!"

"This is such wonderful news, and I cannot express how grateful I am for this assistance... Thank you!"

"Wow! This is such a helpful contribution to students. I appreciate all that you, Chantelle and the rest of your team do!"

-COVID Indigenous Student Support Fund Recipients

Meet the IMN-Ontario Mentors



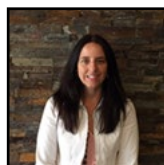
Dr. Amanda Sheppard
Cancer Care Ontario



Dr. Anita Benoit
Toronto



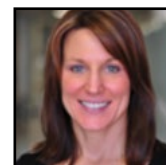
Dr. Bernice Downey
McMaster



Dr. Beverley Shea
Ottawa



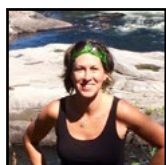
Dr. Bonnie Freeman
McMaster



Dr. Brenda Bruner
Nipissing



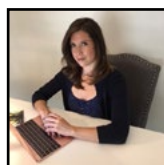
Dr. Brian Branfireun
Western



Dr. Carly Dokis
Nipissing



Dr. Chantelle Richmond
Western



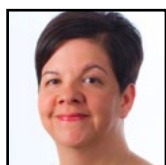
Dr. Chelsea Gabel
McMaster



Dr. Chris Furgal
Trent



Dr. Chris Mushquash
Lakehead



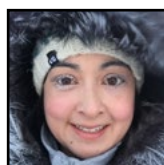
Dr. Cindy Peltier
Nipissing



Dr. Dawn Martin Hill
McMaster



Dr. Diana Lewis
Western



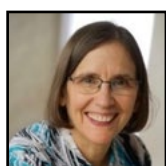
Dr. Gwen Healey
NOSM



Dr. Hannah Tait Neufeld
Guelph



Dr. Heather Castleden
Queen's



Dr. Janet McElhaney
HSNRI



Dr. Janet Smylie
St. Michael's Hospital



Dr. Jeffrey Denis
McMaster



Dr. Jennifer Walker
Laurentian



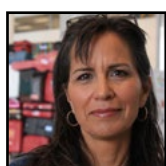
Dr. Jerry White
Western



Dr. Karen Lawford
Queen's



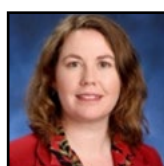
Dr. Katrina Srigley
Nipissing



Dr. Kim Anderson
Guelph



Dr. Laurie Chan
Ottawa



Dr. Lloy Wylie
Western



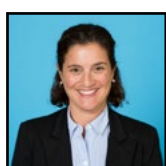
Dr. Lucie Lévesque
Queen's



Dr. Michael Green
Queen's



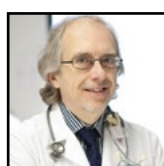
Dr. Michael Robidoux
Ottawa



Dr. Michelle Firestone
St. Michael's Hospital



Dr. Randy Jackson
McMaster



Dr. Robert Hegele
Western



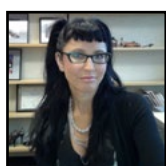
Dr. Sheila Cote-Meek
Laurentian



Dr. Sonia Wesche
Ottawa



Dr. Stewart Harris
Western



Dr. Suzanne Stewart
Toronto



Dr. Taima Moeke-Pickering
Laurentian