

INDIGENOUS HEALTH LEARNING LODGE

McMASTER UNIVERSITY | FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Issue 4
Sept. 2023



LEARNING LODGE

THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ Messages
- ▶ New Faculty
- ▶ Projects
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Student section
- ▶ Allyship
- ▶ Research



Alexandra Trottier Executive Director

Greetings from the Executive Director

I hope that you all have had a restful summer break and that your minds are ready for a new semester back in the Faculty of Health Sciences. I too am returning from a break as I was away for the past academic year (returned May 29th) on a parental leave to start a new chapter in my life - as a mother. It was a time of learning and growing, and many sleepless nights but I am happy to be back to work here in the IHLL. Having a child has put a new lens on the urgency of our work. While working with my mind focused on the 7 generations has always been a part of my thought process, having a child has solidified my commitment to making the world a better place for Indigenous peoples. While our scope of practice is limited to the realm of Health – this area impacts all of us at some point in our lives. it is essential that everyone has access to culturally safe care.

The lodge has continued to pursue this goal while I was away, by continuing relationships within and outside of the FHS. We have worked hard to create connections to departments such as the Department of Family medicine to create a covenant agreement to solidify the DFM's commitment to truth and reconciliation. As well as their commitment of resources - including a new indigenous reconciliation lead role to work with the DFM, their students, and faculty to create a safe working and learning environment for indigenous community members. We have also worked alongside HNHBB hospital CEOs to help develop a process to start making our local hospitals safer for indigenous peoples, and many other smaller but still significant projects.

I thank Lori Davis-Hill for all of her amazing work over the past year and allowing our team to grow and thrive in my absence. We are also pleased that she will be staying within the FHS with her new appointment in the School of Rehabilitation Sciences! Congratulations Lori!

I look forward to the year ahead and all of the amazing opportunities we hope to bring to the FHS to continue our journey of reconciliation. Look to our social media, future newsletters and our website for more information on our upcoming events. Have a wonderful academic year, and as always, we are open for visitors, even if it is just to look at our art, grab a snack or chat with one of our team.



MESSAGES ▶



**Dr. Bernice
Downey**
Associate Dean,
Indigenous Health

Boozhoo, She:kon, Greetings! Welcome to the Faculty of Health Sciences!

I'd like to welcome new and returning Indigenous learners as we launch this new academic year. I always feel it to be a hopeful and exciting time. Here at the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge, we look forward to getting to know our Indigenous learners a bit better as the semester unfolds. The Learning Lodge operational team has been busy planning activities and I hope each of you will take a bit of time to visit our Learning Lodge, meet the team and your Indigenous learner peers.

This is looking to be a banner year for us as we prepare to launch our Indigenous Health Learning Lodge Implementation Plan. The plan represents the final stage of an intensive and comprehensive strategic planning process that involved Faculty of Health Sciences Indigenous and non-Indigenous administrators, faculty, clinical practitioners, learners, Knowledge Helpers and Indigenous community representatives. This work will guide us all in the Faculty as we continue to identify and address health science education -related systemic barriers for Indigenous Learners.

An important priority is our work to advocate and influence systemic change for the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing and traditional healing in the health science education and clinical practice realms. More specifically, how can we co-create space for the uptake of our diverse, Indigenous philosophical perspectives, values and practices regarding Indigenous health and well-being and research? This is a dialogue that has been unfolding in the Indigenous health/research community both internationally and in Canada for a couple of decades now and is captured in the document known

as *'The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'* (UNDRIP). This international instrument provides a universal framework of minimum standards for survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous Peoples that elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration recognizes the respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices as contributing to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment. The framework articles provide more specific actions to guide the implementation work. Canada, as a Member State of the UN, received Royal Assent for UNDRIP in June, 2021 and it now acts as a roadmap for the Government of Canada and First Nations, Inuit and Métis people to work together to implement it. On June 21, 2023, the UN Declaration Act Action Plan was released to guide its implementation and contribute to efforts to break down barriers, combat systemic racism and discrimination, close socio-economic gaps and promote greater equality and prosperity for Indigenous Peoples.

While change is slow, the emergence of UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report and 94 Calls to Action, serve as resources that provide the information needed to assist the FHS in this important work. In addition, we will be collaborating with our Indigenous knowledge Helpers, Elders and community members, Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty, researchers and learners to be involved in our implementation process.

Our operational team are beginning the work to establish our Traditional Hub – another structural entity within our Learning Lodge. The mandate of the Hub will also support this systemic change work. It will also importantly provide a space for our Knowledge Helpers, Traditional Practitioners and learners to gather and share information about Indigenous culture, traditions and practices. We expect it will also facilitate an interface between traditional practitioners and non-Indigenous practitioners to engage in dialogues about their mutual interest in addressing the serious health disparities experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.

Watch for more information on this priority activity as the work unfolds. For more information on UNDRIP and the Declaration Act Action Plan, see this link: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/index.html#:~:text=On%20June%202021%2C%202021%2C%20the,Assent%20and%20came%20into%20force.>

Have a great academic year!
Bernice Downey, Associate Dean, Indigenous Health

NEW FACULTY ▶



Dr. Karen Lawford
Lac Seul First Nation

We are thrilled to share exciting news that **Dr. Karen Lawford** will be joining the midwifery faculty team at McMaster as an associate professor starting September 1, 2023!

Karen is an Indigenous midwife and a registered midwife and a member of Lac Seul First Nation, Treaty 3. She is an alumna of the McMaster MEP and completed her master's (Women's Studies) and PhD (Feminist and Gender Studies) at the University of Ottawa. Karen's focuses on comprehensive, gender-inclusive sexual and reproductive healthcare for Indigenous Peoples and has focussed specifically on maternity care for people who live on reserve. Her research and policy contributions pertaining to mandatory evacuation for birth were the basis for her selection as the 2020 Indspire Laureate in Health. She is a founding member of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, now known as the National Council of Indigenous Midwives. In addition to her research expertise, Karen brings valuable experience and talent related to teaching and curriculum development.

Karen's appointment at McMaster will support her to spend most of her time on research. She will also contribute to teaching undergraduate and graduate midwifery students and will be affiliated with the McMaster Faculty of Health Sciences' Indigenous Learning Lodge

We are also excited to announce Lori Davis Hill's appointment as Assistant Professor, Rehabilitation Sciences, School of Speech Language Pathology. Lori has been a part of the Learning Lodge team serving as interim Executive Director until May of 2023. Before that she worked as the Director of Six Nations Health Services. Lori brings an immense amount of experience and passion to her new role within the school of rehabilitation Sciences, and we wish her all the best on the new journey she is about to begin!



Lori Davis Hill
Assistant Professor, Rehabilitation Sciences,
School of Speech Language Pathology

PROJECTS ▶



Little Learning Library

Just in time for your summer reading our new IHLL Little Learning Library was installed outside of our offices (MDCL 3510). Drop by, pick up a book, read & reflect using the QR code inside and pass it along to someone else to read. We have a variety of fiction and non-fiction books for you to choose from.



Indigenous Culture of Safety Sessions

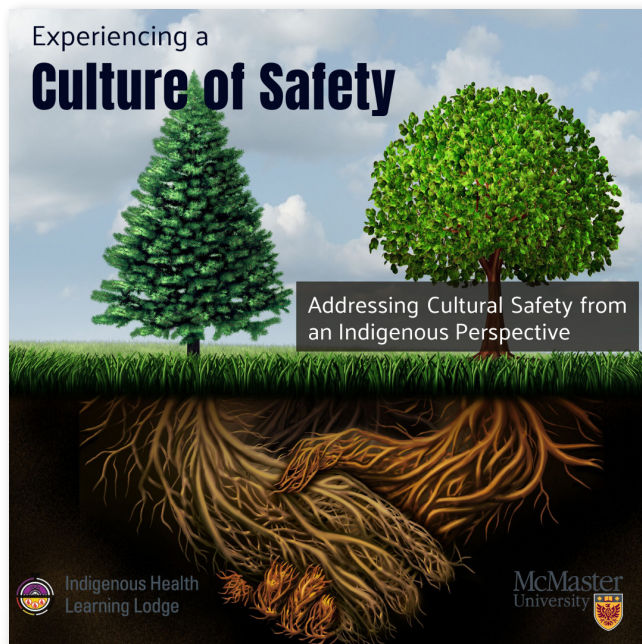
The Learning Lodge will be hosting an Indigenous Health Culture of safety program this semester. The program consists of 5 sessions that focus on colonization, Indigenous ways of knowing and reconciliation. Each session provides participants with a circle sharing structure that offers a unique experience that focuses on the embodiment of Indigenous knowledge. The program has been well received thus far and will be more widely available to students, staff, and faculty as we develop more capacity to run sessions for participants.

The Indigenous Health Learning Lodge is in the process of developing Indigenous Culture of Safety online Modules. This unique module program will be available to all students, faculty and staff that are interested in participating in this exciting learning opportunity. A unique feature of the modules is that they will showcase regional Indigenous Peoples' socio - cultural perspectives and worldview.

In the meantime, we recommend that individuals take advantage of existing digital and print resources to aid in learning more about the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. For example, you can enroll in the San'yas Anti-Racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program (Core Health). The Indigenous Health Learning Lodge has pre-paid spots available to interested students, faculty, and staff.

Please keep an eye out or registration for in the in person circle sharing sessions as spots will be limited.

For more information about the San'yas program, please visit their website: sanyas.ca and if you are interested in enrolling in the program, please contact Ihll@mcmaster.ca to reserve your spots as they are limited.



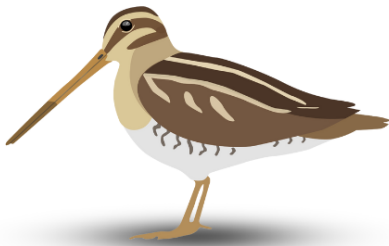
EVENTS ▶

Orange Shirt Day Event

The Learning Lodge will be hosting an event at the Health Sciences Library on **September 25th from 12:30-2:30**. The gathering will be an opportunity to reflect on the shared history of Indigenous people in Canada and all the work that has been done on the road to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We will also be honoring two Indigenous people who have made vital contributions to Indigenous health. Dr. Dignan, the first Indigenous graduate of McMaster University's medical school and his inclusion into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame and Pat Mandy who was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the School of Nursing. Reconciliation is an ongoing process, but we work toward it by honoring and recognizing those who have contributed to its realization through their lives and actions. There will also be orange shirts for sale so please mark your calendar to attend this important event. For more information and to register please click here <https://ihll.mcmaster.ca/events/roads-to-reconciliation/>.



SNIPE Lecture Series



Sharing Notable Indigenous Pedagogy and Education



Indigenous Health
Learning Lodge



SNIPE Speaker Series

This year we will be introducing the SNIPE Lecture Series (Sharing Notable Indigenous Pedagogy and Education). Snipe are a shore bird, that live in a liminal space where the land meets water much like the IHLL exists to bridge the space between western thinking and Indigenous ways of knowing. This is an opportunity to learn more about Indigenous Health throughout Canada. Please stay tuned into the Learning Lodge's events page for more details!

PAST EVENTS ▶



Lori Davis Hill's sendoff

The Learning Lodge hosted a thank you lunch event for Lori Davis Hill and all the hard work she has done for the Lodge over the past year filling the position of interim Executive Director. Her contributions and guidance for the Learning Lodge has been vital in all the success that we have experienced during her time with us. There were many people from around McMaster and the community that attended to show their appreciation for everything she has done for the McMaster community and for the Faculty of Health Sciences. Lori is still staying apart of the Learning Lodge family though as she moves into her exciting new role as associate professor within the School of Rehabilitation Sciences.

STUDENT SECTION ▶



Hello and Welcome!

Welcome to the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University, my name is **Sarah**, and I am your Learner Services Coordinator! I'm so excited to meet all our incoming students this fall and welcome back our returning students! I hope that you had a wonderful summer and are ready to start your journey at McMaster. I want everyone to feel like the Learning Lodge is your home, feel free to stop by anytime to hang out, chat with our awesome staff members and check out our Learner Lounge to get some quiet study time in or meet our resident skeleton, Benny!

If you need anything during your time here, whether that's academic support, community resources or just a friendly face to have a heart to heart or a laugh with, feel free to reach out to me! We also have a lot of events lined up this year including a weekend gathering for Indigenous Faculty of Health Science students! You can stay up to date by following us on our socials @ihllmcmaster or check out our website, ihll.mcmaster.ca for all.

Nia:wen kowa/Thank you to Dr. Karen Hill!

Dr. Karen Hill has recently stepped down from her role as Faculty Advisor for the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge. She continues to practice as a Family Physician while offering Traditional Consults to Indigenous Health Diabetes Circle patients and take language classes in her spare time. On behalf of the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge, we would like to thank Dr. Karen Hill for her dedication to supporting our Indigenous learners and although she is not our Faculty Advisor, she remains faculty member with the Department of Family Medicine and will still work with the Learning Lodge on some upcoming events. We wish Dr. Hill the very best on her next endeavors!

Thank you/Nia:wen kowa for everything you do, Dr. Hill!



Karennaonwe Dr. Karen Hill

Student Lounge

Welcome to the new and improved Learner's Lounge!

Over the summer, IHLL has rearranged the furniture and have added things to make the space a warm and cozy space for Indigenous learners. The space is accessible 24/7, e-mail ihll@mcmaster.ca for the door code.



STUDENT GATHERING



This year we hosted our first gathering for Indigenous Students in the Faculty of Health Sciences. This idea was originated by Kelsey Allen, a 2nd year Indigenous McMaster Medicine student. Kelsey's vision was to create a safe space out on the land where Indigenous students could gather and participate in cultural workshops. We held the gathering on Sept 8-10th, 2023 at Chiefswood Park on Six Nations of the Grand River. There were 14 students who joined us for a weekend filled with cultural workshops, including circles, learning about traditional medicines and moccasin making! Students were able to connect with other Indigenous students, meet staff, faculty and "Aunties" who are all there to support them in their journey. The weekend was filled with laughter and connection, and everyone reported that they really enjoyed taking time away from their busy schedules to slow down, reconnect with themselves, build relationships, and learn new skills.

We'd like to thank Kelsey Allen and Isabelle Lei for all their hard work on organizing the weekend. We'd also like to thank Dr. Patricia Farrugia, Dr. Karen Hill and Auntie Leigh Hill for spending the weekend with our amazing students! We hope this is the first of many gatherings!



Saroo Sharda

MBChB MMed FRCPC (anesth.) (She/Her/Hers)

Associate Dean Equity & Inclusion Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Lead, College of Physicians & Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) Faculty of Health Sciences

Dr Sharda is the inaugural Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion for the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University. At the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario where she is a medical advisor and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead, she has led cross-organizational work to embed an EDI and anti-racist lens into complaints processes, policy work and ongoing education of committee and Council.

She holds a Masters and Fellowship in Medical Education and her scholarship is rooted in theories of power, hierarchy, antioppression and identity formation. She was recently awarded the Pauline Alakija trailblazer award for her EDI work.

When not pursuing her hobby of creative writing and writing coaching, she works hard to avoid stepping on lego pieces strewn around the house by her 6-year-old and 9-year-old sons.

1. How does the role of Indigenous Ally apply in your current role?

Being an ally to the work of Indigenous colleagues and peoples' is an integral part of my role as the Associate Dean of Equity and Inclusion for FHS. Early on, Dr. Downey and I spoke about the two row approach and how while our work is separate and distinct, it also runs in parallel and at times intersects and intertwines. Equity and antiracism work cannot be done without an understanding of the fundamental harms that colonialism and anti-Indigenous racism have caused, and continue to cause, especially with regard to differential health care outcomes.

2. What is the most challenging aspect of trying to influence and change inequitable health systems towards being more culturally safe for Indigenous people?

I think one of the most challenging aspects of this, especially for health care professionals who have not learnt about racism as a social determinant of health in their education and training, is getting people to understand that race is not biological. It is a socially constructed phenomenon that has been used to control and exert power and to remove people from their land and resources. And when we do that, we create trauma which then leads to all kinds of illness. Many health care professionals are still viewing illness from purely a biomedical model and not from a trauma informed place. When we can start to understand that removal from language, family, community etc, is trauma, and that trauma causes illness, then we can truly start to appreciate that illness is so much more than just biomedical. When we start to appreciate that, then we can start to understand why cultural humility and cultural safety are so crucial in how we approach healing.

3. How would you encourage your colleagues to become more involved in Indigenous allyship initiatives?

I would encourage people to listen. Truly listen. And try not to centre yourself and your own guilt and shame as you listen. Listen with humility, curiosity and compassion. Then reflect. Think deeply about what you have heard. Believe what you have heard. Use the many, many resources out there to further your understanding (don't put the burden on your Indigenous colleagues – there is so much information out there), and THEN act. Most folks I think, move to action too quickly. But action that is not borne out of thoughtfulness and self-reflection, can cause harm. And be ok with getting it wrong. This is a lifelong journey. We will all stumble along the way.

RESEARCH▶

IHLL's research hub has had an eventful summer and is excited for the beginning of the school year. Dr. Jennifer Walker, Dr. Karen Hill, and Dr. Patricia Farrugia all participated in the Indigenous Health Research Conference hosted by the Indigenous Health Movement. At the conference they discussed cultural safety, Indigenous health research methodologies and healthcare for Indigenous peoples.

Additionally, the research hub supported MIRI's IndigiNerds summer program. The program is an 8-week intensive research training program hosted by MIRI. McMaster hosted Indigenous undergraduate students from universities across Canada. Participants took part in workshops and Indigenous knowledge programming while contributing as research scholars under the supervision of McMaster faculty. IHLL's Dr. Jennifer Walker hosted her own IndigiNerd student this year, and we are excited to see the research outcomes from their project.

The research hub has also been supporting ongoing and upcoming initiatives including the MIRI research primer, which will be released later this semester. As well as supporting the transition of the Indigenous Mentorship Network of Ontario to being hosted at

McMaster. The IMN-Ontario seeks to grow the next generation of Indigenous health scholars with an eye to serve the research needs and capacities of Ontario's Indigenous communities and advancing Indigenous health equity. While at McMaster, the IMN-Ontario is being led by Dr. Chelsea Gabel.

Finally, the research hub is excited to welcome Tristan Bomberry, who will be enrolled as a graduate student in health research methodology being supervised by Dr. Jennifer Walker. Tristan is a member of the Cayuga Nation from the Six Nations of the Grand River. He also completed his undergraduate degree in health sciences at McMaster. Tristan firmly believes that gaining an understanding of the factors influencing community health is crucial. His approach encompasses recognizing that numerous elements can impact individuals' overall well-being. During his MSc studies, Tristan's focus will be on actively pursuing goals that the community has identified, and he aims to achieve measurable and concrete results in doing so. We are excited to see the work Tristan does over the course of his graduate studies and look forward to seeing him in the Lodge this coming school year.

Save the Date
2nd Annual Indigenous Research Day

**Curious about
Indigenous centered
research at
McMaster?**

Join us in fostering connections throughout campus, recognizing student research, and celebrating the work of our colleagues

Registration information to be announced!

McMaster University | Indigenous Research Institute

Save the Date

**2ND ANNUAL
INDIGENOUS
RESEARCH
DAY**

November 7th, 2023
CIBC Hall, 3rd floor MUSC
McMaster University

McMaster University | Indigenous Research Institute

