

# INDIGENOUS HEALTH LEARNING LODGE

McMASTER UNIVERSITY | FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Issue 5  
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## Alexandra Trotter Executive Director

### Greetings from the Executive Director

"I learned what I know in the Longhouse.  
That was my school. The elders were my teachers.  
Your schools don't teach you those things.  
There's coming a day when your education will fail you  
Because they don't teach you the spirituality  
You learn how to get a job, make money, and manage business,  
But you don't know about the Creator's place  
Or about what your path is"

**Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah** in "To Become a Human Being"

A while ago this book had been mentioned to me in passing and I wanted to read it. A few weeks later I noticed it while I was talking to someone in one of our offices on a shelf of old books from the ISHS office and I knew it was a sign for me to read it. There is some profound wisdom in the pages from the Tadodaho of the Haudenosaunee, and I wanted to share with you this excerpt because this is a message I am consistently receiving from family, friends, students and faculty. We feel disconnected. There is an epidemic of loneliness and a feeling of aimlessness for all people, especially the younger generations and this is one gap we are hoping to start being able to fill through our work at the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge.

At a meeting we had last summer with most of the Vice Deans and the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences one person came to me and said that they didn't entirely understand the concept of spirit. Additionally, at the end of that meeting, another person came forward and said that we've lost the humanity in healthcare. While McMaster University is renowned for its dedication to evidence based work and research somewhere we've lost what makes us human. When speaking to one of our knowledge helpers in November, he spoke about how western science looks at the absolute minutia of the world, but misses the bigger picture. It brings to mind the analogy of the three blind people describing an elephant. One says it is long and smooth (touching a tusk), one says it is thin and hairy (touching the tail) and yet another says it is enormous and tall (touching its torso). All three miss the big picture because they are only seeing a small part of the whole.



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

## Knowledge Translation: Considering an Indigenous Cultural Context

Canadian research institutes report that knowledge translation is the key link between health sciences research and improved health outcomes. However, emerging evidence demonstrates that this is not the case for Indigenous people. For example, in 2008, Cochran noted that while a large amount of health research among Indigenous populations has occurred, it has not had a significant impact on overall well-being. This is problematic when it is well documented that *effective* knowledge translation is critical to implementing policy and program changes that require shared understandings of knowledge systems, assumptions, and practices. Cochran also reports that while multiple factors are to be considered an important one is that of epistemology. Namely, differences in knowledge systems and a need for an improved interface between Indigenous communities, researchers and policy makers.

Morton-Ninomiya notes that mainstream research on Indigenous people is void of 'culturally relevant, meaningful, engaging, contextual, or decolonizing knowledge'. This critique is not a recent one. Indigenous health researchers nationally and internationally have been ringing this bell for over two decades in the call to decolonize health research on Indigenous peoples. This systemic barrier has potential to perpetuate inequitable health outcomes among Indigenous peoples.

Western Scientific or mainstream KT as we know it is rooted in Western scientific paradigms. Implications for Indigenous populations is that Indigenous knowledge cannot be verified by scientific criteria nor can science be adequately assessed according to the tenets of IK. Each is built on differently philosophies, methodologies and criteria.

Mainstream KSTE methods are not necessarily able to contribute to the improvement of Indigenous health because they tend to not include Indigenous understandings of health and well-being and are noted to separate - rather than integrate issues of culture from the transfer, dissemination and integration of knowledge into practice. This situation can be considered to be a cultural dissonance in the mainstream research world regarding Indigenous research methodologies and in particular, the KSTE process.

Davis et al. note that **an Indigenous context of KSTE** is that the research is expected to have resulted in changes to policy, practice and health outcomes for organizations and Indigenous communities. Mason Durie a Maori scholar from Ateorora also known as New Zealand, proposes that contests about the validities of the two systems tend to serve as distractions from explorations of the interface and the subsequent opportunities for creating new knowledge that reflects the dual persuasions. Durie also proposes that rather than contesting relative validities, that an increasing number of Indigenous scholars are using the interface between western science and IK as a source of inventiveness. They have access to both and use the insights and methods of one to enhance the other.

While the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS-2), Chapter 9 was developed in order to continue the work to establish an ethical space for dialogue on common interests and points of difference between researcher and Indigenous communities engaged in research and a measure of progress has been made in this regard. In addition, the global community of Indigenous health researchers have made significant contributions in advocacy and promoting Indigenous health research methodologies.

However, a key barrier to a more robust and culturally relevant KSTE of Indigenous health research, is a lack of understanding by non-Indigenous clinicians, researchers, civil society and policy makers of the socio-cultural - historical context. As such, there is a need for more advocacy, awareness building and education. The team at the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge are engaged in the work to further explore and raise awareness regarding how we can co-create an effective interface. This work is being done through both the work of individual Indigenous health researchers and activities and projects that are being developed as part of our Research Hub strategic plan.

For general information: visit the IHLL website at: [ihll.mcmaster.ca](http://ihll.mcmaster.ca)

For more information regarding this topic and others related to Indigenous health research: <https://ihll.mcmaster.ca/ihll-research-hub/>

## Culture of Safety

### Continued from page 1

This is the wisdom of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge and ways of being, it is connecting the mind, body, spirit and emotions together. It is considering the person in their context. It is considering the history of intergenerational trauma and how it has impacted people through the years. It is considering the disconnection of spirit from the body and how that can make us profoundly sick. This connection, this central humanity, is a large part of what is missing from our educational systems. It is all well and good to know the different elements of anatomy, or how to make a differential diagnosis, but if we do not consider the person in a wholistic way we will never achieve lasting health. We continue to treat the symptoms and call them the cause. The cause is living out of balance with ourselves and mother nature. The cause is the disconnection from spirit, self, and community.

We are hopeful to bring in a traditional practitioner this semester to speak about the nature of health & spirit for 'lunch and learn' meetings this semester. If you want to know more about spirit, and more about the deeper nature of health and wellbeing I encourage you to look to our website and attend.

Be well & care for your mind, body and spirit.

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 for registration for in the in person Culture of Safety circle sharing sessions as spots will be limited.

For more information about the San'yas program, please visit their website: [sanyas.ca](http://sanyas.ca) and if you are interested in enrolling in the program, please contact [lhll@mcmaster.ca](mailto:lhll@mcmaster.ca) to reserve your spots as they are limited.

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## Six Nations Family Health Team and Indigenous Health Learning Lodge Collaboration

### Successful Holistic Interdisciplinary Placements (SHIP) Committee

The Six Nations Health Team and the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge at McMaster are collaborating in the creation of a placement program for Learners in McMaster Faculty of Health Science programs. The partnership will work towards creating a healthy environment that is both supportive of Indigenous health care workers & patients on Six Nations while providing the best experience for the Learners. The goal of the program will be to give learners a more holistic Indigenous health experience by exposing them to many different areas of Indigenous health as opposed to the narrow focus of certain programs. The creation of this program will improve the quality of health care for Indigenous people as well as expand the education of Learners at McMaster providing them with meaningful experience that they can utilize throughout their career.



# EVENTS ▶

## Truth and Reconciliation Day event, September 25th 2023

The Learning Lodge hosted an event at the Health Sciences Library on September 25th . The gathering was 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 honored 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.



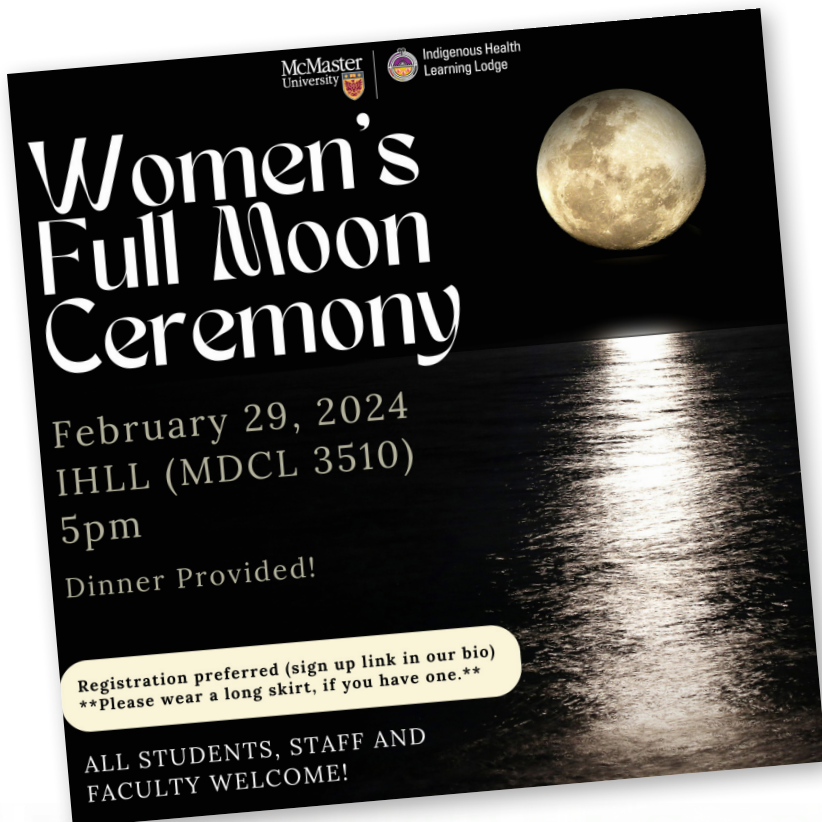


# COMING EVENTS ▶

## SNIFE Speaker Series

This year we will be introducing the **SNIFE** 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 for everyone to learn more about Indigenous Health throughout Canada.

The First Speaker we featured was Dr. Dawn Martin Hill. She provided an engaging discussion on Climate Change as determinant of health; how Indigenous ecological knowledge can mitigate health and wellbeing. Please click this link to view the video of her discussion SNIFE Lecture 1. For the Winter Semester we are featuring Tehahenteh Miller and Liz Akiwenzie as they provide us with traditional Indigenous knowledge and the relationship to health. See below to register for the event and for more information. Future SNIFE lectures will feature Dr. Janet Smylie & other notable speakers. Look to our website & social Media for future speakers



## Full Moon Ceremony

Join us for our next full moon ceremony. This will be occurring the week of the full moon in February (and every month) – look to our website & social media for the next date.

# COMING EVENTS ▶



**Land Based Learning**  
Traditional Teachings with  
Jan Longboat

**Upcoming Dates:**  
Feb 26, Mar 27, Apr 25

Transportation and Lunch Provided!  
Bus leaves from MUSC @ 10am  
Register @ [ihll.mcmaster.ca](http://ihll.mcmaster.ca)

McMaster University  
Indigenous Health Learning Lodge

## Land Based Learning

**Land Based Learning future sessions** to be held February 26th, March 27th & April 25th –  
**Book your calendar now!**



## **Jonathan Bramson, PhD** Vice Dean, Research for the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) and a Professor in the Department of Medicine at McMaster University

In his role as Vice Dean, Jonathan stewards the FHS research enterprise by ensuring that all research is performed in an ethical way and in full compliance with the agencies who fund our research. He oversees the governance of the Research Centres and Institutes to foster a robust, impactful and collaborative health research enterprise. Dr. Bramson also works with the FHS community to develop new research pathways, such as the Research Hub at the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge.

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

The Faculty of Health Sciences is committed to Indigenous Reconciliation through partnership with Indigenous colleagues and communities to improve health outcomes for Indigenous peoples. Research is key to this effort. As Vice Dean, Research for the Faculty of Health Sciences, I take my role in stewarding this effort very seriously. To this end, I seek to lower barriers to research and bring to bear whatever resources I can to enable our researchers working in the important area. As a descendant of white settlers, I see allyship as a mechanism to help chart a path towards reconciliation by following the guidance of the Indigenous research community. I am aware of the good that research can deliver but I am also aware of the pain and harm it has caused in the past and can cause in the future. Through active communication and learning and thoughtful movement forward, I am confident that we, as a Faculty, will achieve our reconciliation goals and establish a thriving hub of research that safely addresses health concerns of Indigenous communities and fosters improved outcomes that undo existing health inequities.

### **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 find the most challenging aspect to be the general lack of understanding of the systemic issues that have created unsafe healthcare environments. While many of my colleagues appreciate the importance of reconciliation, they do not recognize the systemic barriers that lead to the inequity. I am hopeful that we can employ our history in evidence-based medicine to spotlight these barriers and shift the mindsets of the health professionals who don't see them. Once we draw attention to the components of the system that lead to health inequities, we can develop strategies to rebuild an equitable solution that considers non-Western perspectives and Indigenous ways of knowing.

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

I encourage colleagues to participate in cultural sensitivity training, such as the San'yas Indigenous Cultural Sensitivity Online Training. I had the opportunity to participate in the San'yas course early in my tenure as Vice Dean, Research and the course opened my eyes to many issues that I was unaware of. I also encourage my colleagues to spend more time listening than talking when faced with uncomfortable topics, such as health inequity. Far too often, we seek to solve problems that we do not fully understand, which can lead to more harm, despite the best of intentions, and fail to achieve the true spirit of allyship.



# STUDENT SECTION ▶

## RECAP ON FALL TERM EVENTS SEPTEMBER 2023



### Nagishkodaadiwag

(They meet each other while going somewhere)

## Moccasin Making Workshop MOSPF 2023

We applied to McMaster Okanagan's Special Project Fund and were approved to host 2 Moccasin Making Workshops. We hosted one workshop during our gathering in September and another workshop in November in Indigenous Student Services. A special thank you to Okanagan for approving this project!







## Bones of Crows Movie Screening

For Truth and Reconciliation Day, we hosted a movie screening event at 3 locations; Hamilton, Waterloo and Niagara. We invited students, staff, faculty and community members to join us to watch this film. We asked movie goers to kindly bring a donation of menstrual products and diapers that would in turn be given to a local community organization. In exchange, they would receive an orange shirt. Our registration numbers were 65 in Hamilton, 39 in Niagara and 35 in Waterloo. Although, our turnout far exceeded these numbers. We'd like to send a special thank you to Dr. Patricia Farrugia for having idea and organizing this event!

## OCTOBER 2023

### Mac Moves Week October 2-5th

We invited Dallas Squire from Onkwehonwe Games to teach students how to play Ding Ball as participants in the Okanagan Mac Moves Week.

# STUDENT SECTION ▶

OCTOBER 2023

## Halloween Party

We hosted a spook-tacular Halloween party!



## Orange Shirt Day

In honour of Truth and Reconciliation Day, the Indigenous Health Learning Lodge and Indigenous Student Services held a campaign asking McMaster Indigenous students to create a design that could be applied to orange shirts. The design that was chosen belongs to Ethan Michalenko, a Métis student in the Bachelor of Health Sciences program. Ethan shares his inspiration behind the design:

“The main inspiration behind my Every Child Matters t-shirt was the element of inclusivity. I wanted to show that the Indigenous people of Canada are stronger together as we build a future for ourselves and honour those who were impacted by residential schools.

When designing the T-shirt, I wanted to have an element to represent each of the three Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

The artwork displayed in ‘Every’ is supposed to represent First Nations people, the artwork displayed in ‘Child’ is supposed to represent Métis people, and the artwork displayed in ‘Matters’ is supposed to represent Inuit people.”

The orange shirts were sold in the campus store for the month of September with the proceeds from the sales being donated to the community. We’d like to extend our gratitude to the McMaster community for raising over \$16,000 that will be donated to the Survivors’ Secretariat on Six Nations!



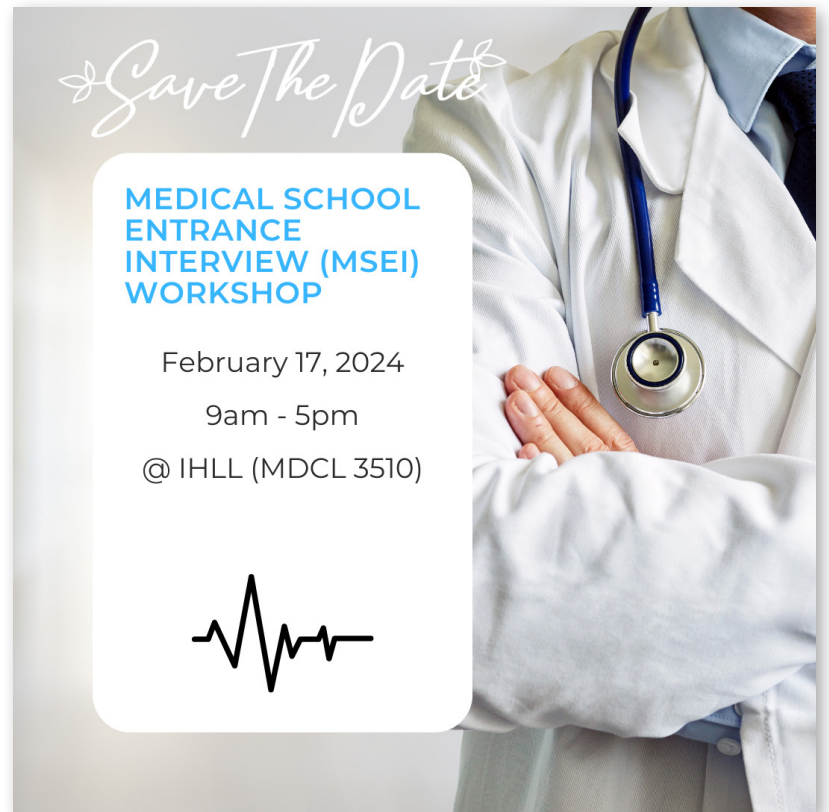


# UP COMING ▶

## Medical School Entrance Interview Workshop

The Indigenous Health Learning Lodge (IHLL) will host our annual Medical School Entrance Interview (MSEI) workshop on February 17, 2024. This workshop was developed and piloted by the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC) in 2012 and is part of the support provided to future Indigenous medical students here at McMaster. "At IPAC we understand the participating in entrance interviews for medical school can be a daunting experience for any student and it is our goal, through this course to provide you with additional tools and skills to help you succeed in your upcoming interviews."


We invite all Indigenous students who have secured an MMI interview or those who are interested in applying to medical school to attend. We're also asking current Indigenous medicine students to be mentors. If you're interested in participating, please contact our Learner Services Coordinator, Sarah Thorne at [Iscihll@mcmaster.ca](mailto:Iscihll@mcmaster.ca).



*Save The Date*

**MEDICAL SCHOOL ENTRANCE INTERVIEW (MSEI) WORKSHOP**

February 17, 2024  
9am - 5pm  
@ IHLL (MDCL 3510)



**INDIGENOUS GRADUATION CELEBRATION**



*save the date*  
**Wednesday June 5, 2024**  
LRW CONCERT HALL

McMaster University | Indigenous Student Services | Indigenous Health Learning Lodge | Indigenous Studies Department

# UP COMING ▶

## Sh\*tty Crafts Club

We hosted our first Sh\*tty Crafts Club on January 25th where we made some fantastic trophies for things like, "getting out of bed today", or "got out of the house".

Please join us for our next session on Thursday, February 29th from 3-5pm

**Open to all  
Students,  
Staff and  
Faculty**

McMaster University  
Indigenous Health Learning Lodge

NOW RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR:  
**SH\*TTY  
CRAFT  
CLUB**

A CLUB FOR GLUING BEADS TO TRASH, TALKING ABOUT OUR FEELINGS  
AND MAKING SILLY LITTLE THINGS

SUPPLIES AND REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED!

**OCCURS EVERY  
MONTH!**



# RESEARCH ▶

The IHLL's research hub has had a busy fall semester and is excited for the upcoming projects and events on the way in the new year. Some of the highlights of the semester include Dr. Jennier Walker and IHLL supporting the McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI) with the development and launch of the Indigenous Research Primer, a resource to assist Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers in centering their research utilizing Indigenous Way of Knowing.

The research hub also supported the planning of Indigenous Research Day. Dr. Bernice Downey, Lori Davis Hill, and Dr. Patricia Farrugia all presented their research, as well as undergraduate students Hannah Butterworth and Ethan Michalenko, who both did fantastic jobs with their presentations.

Finally, Dr. Jennifer Walker had a very exciting end to the year, attending and providing the keynote speech for the first International Indigenous Dementia Research Network (IIDRN) Annual Conference held in Hawaii. The conference was the first international Indigenous

dementia research conference of its kind and welcomed researchers, community members and elders from around the world to share their work. Jennifer described the experience as a career highlight, and an exciting time to be a part of the Indigenous dementia research community.

After a restful holiday season, the research hub is looking forward to the upcoming semester and has several projects in the works. The research hub continues to develop its structure, and it is eager to support more students, researchers, and institutes in the upcoming months. We will continue supporting faculty, student, and community requests, including providing guidance and resources as necessary to support Indigenous health research. Finally, we are excited to begin working on an Indigenous health sciences research supplement. This supplement is designed to enhance MIRI's current research primer and provide a health science focused lens on Indigenous research. We look forward to launching this resource during the summer of 2024.



**Dr. Jenn Walker and her Colleagues at the International Indigenous Dementia Research Network (IIDRN) Annual Conference held in Hawaii.**

